Biogr. c. 104 F/2 Fitzgerald

# THE SHERIDANS.

*Thos. Gainsborough, R.A.* *G. H. Every.*

# Miss Linley and Brother.

*From the original Picture in the possession of Countess Delawarr.*

1886.

THE

# LIVES OF THE SHERIDANS

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD

AUTHOR OF

'THE ROMANCE OF THE STAGE,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WITH ENGRAVINGS ON STEEL BY STODART AND CARTER.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1886.

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Miss Finley

*From the original Picture*

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THE HONBLE. MRS. NORTON. BY G. J. STODART, FROM THE ORIGINAL PICTURE BY JOHN HAYTER. (*To face page* 178.)

THE DUCHESS OF SOMERSET IN A FANCY COSTUME, AS QUEEN OF BEAUTY. BY G. J. STODART. (*To face page* 352.)

# THE SHERIDANS.

## CHAPTER I.

### NEW DRURY LANE THEATRE—1794.

THOUGH Sheridan had been in possession of the theatre for a dozen years, his embarrassments had begun early, and had steadily increased, but not so as to overpower his arts of contrivance. Not yet, however, shall we open the chapter of the shifts and devices by which he encountered debt and raised supplies. For these there was little excuse, as the theatre might have handsomely supplied his wants. At the lowest calculation he must have drawn some thousands a year as his share—possibly four or five. But all was carelessly administered or totally neglected. While the theatre was in this condition, the manager conceived a bold scheme for extrication. The debts on the house now reached to over £50,000, which included Garrick's mortgage still unpaid, together with

other charges on the shares. This was a heavy burden on so small a theatre, holding a slender audience. The brilliant idea now presented itself to Sheridan of building a vast temple, nearly double the size, and of obtaining from the public sufficient subscriptions to clear off the old debt, and build the new house. The money was to be raised on the patent or monopoly of the whole, which was the really valuable asset.

In this change the manager was prompted by many motives, the least of which was the necessity of repairs : for the late theatre—Garrick's—had been entirely renovated and restored only a year or two before his retirement. It seemed probable that a new house of vast accommodation, though with increased expenses, would add enormously to the profits, provided—an important qualification—the *public came in sufficient numbers.* The old house was a little larger than the late Haymarket Theatre ; its nightly expenses were about £70, the profits of a full house about £160. The expenses of the new house would be at least double. But it ought to have been seen that a fatal blunder was being committed. For in exact proportion to its size would be the loss of effect, and of the capacity for seeing and hearing.

The unbusiness-like character of the scheme was also conspicuously shown. It was 'brought out' with great success, three trustees being appointed in whom all the moneys were to be vested, viz., Mr.

Anthony Wallis, Garrick's solicitor, Mr. Richard Ford, and Hammersleys the bankers. These represented the creditors. They held among them ninety shares of £500 each, which was a substantial interest in the concern, amounting to nearly a third of the whole.* The proposals were carried out, the money was raised, and the shares were taken eagerly, for they were subject to interest even during the building of the theatre.†

* The sum raised was in three hundred debentures of £500 each, amounting to £150,000. So popular was the investment at first, that the debentures were quoted at 5 per cent. premium.

† The improvidence of this arrangement was soon shown, for at once a difficulty occurred with the Duke of Bedford, who declined to grant a new lease of his ground unless a clear title to a patent could be proved! Only a few years were left of Garrick's patent—a short 'running' one, as it was called—and the Duke naturally refused to grant a valuable term of 103 years on so precarious a security. The managers were obliged to purchase from Harris what was called the dormant patent of Killigrew. It was valued by Mr. Fox at £20,000, of which £11,000 was paid. Harris only held about three-quarters of the patent (forty-six parts out of sixty), the remainder was in the possession of White and Warren, two persons who had married Powell's daughters, one of the original patentees of Covent Garden Theatre. The first-named refused to part with his share under £5,000. Eventually a short patent for twenty-one years was obtained, which satisfied the noble landlord. £16,000 in all was paid for this dormant patent, including £4,000 for interest. A costly purchase indeed! In 1797 an account was furnished by the trustees of the expenditure of the £150,000 placed in their hands. A sum of nearly £6,000 was paid to the subscribers during the building of the theatre; the rest was thus laid out:

While the theatre was rebuilding, the manager transferred his company to the Opera House in the Haymarket. This brought him in connection with a truly remarkable adventurer, named Taylor, who was director of the opera, and whose career, a most extraordinary one, was of a congenial cast to his own. An uncouth Scot, with little power of discrimination, he contrived by sheer cunning, impudence, and sometimes violence, to keep possession of this great establishment, to go into Parliament, to get the courts of law on his side, all without paying anybody. He was driven at last to gaol, or to the 'Rules' of the King's Bench; but this made no difference. As he said humorously enough, 'No man could direct the opera who was *out* of prison, as

| | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|
| To A. Wallis, executor of the late D. Garrick, for mortgage of Lacy . . . . | 28,847 | 14 | 3 |
| „ A. Wallis, mortgage on Linley's share . | 10,951 | 14 | 5 |
| „ trustees of J. Richardson . . . | 2,520 | 15 | 7 |
| „ A. Wallis, his own mortgage . . . | 1,226 | 8 | 9 |
| „ R. Ford, in part payment of a mortgage from Linley to him . . . | 3,618 | 18 | 0 |
| „ Wesley's mortgage on Sheridan's share . | 4,909 | 12 | 10 |
| Cost of theatre to date . . . . | 71,419 | 0 | 0 |
| | £123,494 | 3 | 10 |

Leaving about £27,000 unaccounted for. It was stated that the mere building ultimately cost about £129,000. On passing this report, a vote of thanks was proposed to Mr. Sheridan for his 'manly and honourable conduct' in the transaction.

he required protection from the greedy attacks of the singers and dancers.'*

With this person Sheridan entered into strict alliance. Not content with his own serious venture, which would tax all his energies, he determined to be an Opera House manager, and joined with him in a formal agreement for its direction! Sheridan here learned the art of raising money on opera-boxes; Taylor, during a course of years, disposing of his boxes for a thousand pounds apiece. Sheridan bitterly rued his connection with this adventurer; and when sunk in difficulties, accused him in the bitterest terms he could find of having swindled him in this matter of boxes, which helped to ruin him. With his usual cleverness, he contrived to enlist his political friends in the transaction; and we find Mr. Fox, the Prince of Wales, and others engaged in negotiating with the Opera House and Covent Garden for

* 'On my return in 1813,' says Angelo, 'I found poor Taylor still more deeply involved in Chancery suits, and without any hopes of continuing his seat in Parliament; and as the dissolution might shortly be looked for, he was, I feared, on his last legs. From other quarters I learned that he had been obliged to play at hide-and-seek with his creditors, and finally to emigrate to France, where he died a few years ago. Taylor was, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary men ever *imported* from the North. Without a guinea or any connection, he contrived, at an early period of his life, to acquire the management and property, to a certain extent, of the first theatre in the world, and to retain his situation for many years in spite of the storms and difficulties with which he was assailed.'

patents, etc. Mr. Fox appears to have actually made the treaty for the Killigrew patent. These distinguished persons were chiefly interested in the Opera House, and were anxious that the two establishments should not damage one another through contending interests.*

The vast new house was opened on April 21, 1794. It was boasted in the prologue that enormous cisterns of water, iron curtains, ostentatiously struck with a hammer, had been provided against fire; and, as Miss Farren put it, 'They set conflagration at defiance'—a rash challenge to the God of Fire, too soon to take it up, and mock such puny devices. The house held nearly four thousand persons, and a night's receipts were estimated at £800, more than double that of the old house. In the stage had been inserted, by Sheridan's order, a plank of the old 'boards' trodden by Garrick; but the change

* By the agreement between Sheridan and other proprietors, and W. Taylor, of the King's Theatre, Haymarket, forty operas were to be given, and the off-nights to be devoted to the Drury Lane Company. The Drury Lane proprietors were to pay the rent, taxes, etc., and also a sum of £5,000 for general purposes. Twenty-four subscription-boxes to be at the disposal of the Duke of Bedford and of Lord Salisbury. Reference is made to another agreement in 1790. It was also stipulated that Drury Lane was to have no claim after July, 1793. There is in existence an agreement in Italian between Sheridan, designated pompously 'Impresario,' etc., and Vestris, the dancer. See also for further details of this Opera-House agreement of 1793, and the share of the Prince of Wales, Fox, and others, the author's 'History of the English Stage,' vol. ii., p. 334.

sealed the doom of comedy, and it was found at once that seeing, or at least hearing, for those at the greatest distance from the stage was hopeless. As this example was to be followed at the other great theatre, Sheridan may be said to have had the discredit of the destruction of the drama, and thus in his reckless fashion was to shipwreck what it had taken Garrick's long and respectable life to construct. It was curious, too, that this blow should come from one whose powers should have done so much to restore the stage.*

The veteran Dowton thus quaintly gave his opinion to the committee of 1832: 'Mrs. Siddons said to me, "I am glad to see you at Drury Lane, but you are to act in a wilderness of a place; and God knows, if I had not made my reputation in a small theatre, I never should have done it here; but the public gave me credit for what they saw me do and heard me say at a small theatre. All the actors

* Sheridan at least deserves credit for one reform. In April, 1780, an advertisement set out that by particular desire '"Hamlet," as written by Shakespeare,' would be performed. This referred to Garrick's barbarous mutilation of the play—incomprehensible in a man of such taste—who in 1774 had produced '"Hamlet," with alterations.' He had boasted he would not leave the stage 'till he had rescued this noble play from the rubbish of the fifth act,' and accordingly the grave-diggers, fencing, with all the violent business of the last act, were left out. For six years this became the regular acting version at Drury Lane. I possess the prompter's copy, which I believe belonged to Mr. Webster. It was reserved for the good taste of Sheridan to restore the accepted version.

of that day, including Mr. Charles Kemble, who was a young man as I was at that time, can remember that Mr. King never went on the stage without cursing it, and saying it was not like a theatre, and if Garrick was alive he would not act in it. The public complained that they could neither see nor hear. The persons who used to attend the theatres twenty or thirty years ago do not come now. I know many of the highest characters, who say, "We do not come to the theatre now." His late Majesty, George IV., said to me, when I had once the honour of seeing him at Brighton, "I do not go to those theatres because they are so large; I am not comfortable."'

When the theatre was opened, it was already in debt. The estimates had been exceeded by an immense sum, and there was much recrimination between the architect and the manager, the former declaring that he had not exceeded the estimate; and indeed it seems but too likely that the money had been 'muddled' away for other purposes.* However that might be, we find Sheridan, soon after the opening, issuing proposals for raising money on the receipts by debentures of £3,000 each, on which were to be paid £1 for every night of performance. Of these there were to be forty-seven. It would seem

* A story that has a flavour of comedy is related of the manager, who, trying the 'acoustic properties' of his house, ascended to the gallery and bade one of the carpenters speak loudly to him. The man said, 'See, Mr. Sheridan, me and my mates have not been paid our salaries; and if they're not paid, etc.'

from the committee's statement that twenty of these rent-charges were taken up, whose claims at the burning amounted to £105,000. But, in truth, the gigantic theatre may be said never to have 'paid' from the first night. So vast an establishment required powers of organization and management that Sheridan could not supply. His reckless, careless system could only result in losses that multiplied in fearful proportion. Accordingly, after a few years, we are not surprised to find that the charges of interest or rent had not been paid, and that the whole was in dreadful embarrassment and confusion.

This leads us to an incident which is perhaps the least creditable of Sheridan's many ingenious devices. A little after the theatre opened, he succeeded in decoying his old friend Richardson and a Mr. Grubb into the enterprise. Both these gentlemen were bitten with the theatrical *furia*. Both loved to be 'behind the scenes,' and Grubb had written some prologues. It is evidence of the worth of Richardson's character that his friends, including the Dukes of Bedford and Northumberland, Lords Fitzwilliam and Thanet, should have raised £14,000 among them to buy him a share in the theatre. The sum asked for a fourth share was the enormous one of £25,000, so that Richardson had to find £11,000 besides. This balance, it seems, was never paid.*

* We find this from the committee's statement of account on the later rebuilding of this theatre after the fire, where £6,000

He thus contrived to join the enterprise without actual outlay, though he 'paid with his person,' while Sheridan benefited to a handsome amount. Mr. Grubb was induced to pay £15,000 for his share, but was presently to find that instead of making a profitable investment, he had involved his whole fortune. He had actually to keep in hiding to avoid the bailiffs, who had processes against the theatre.

Notwithstanding these aids, the theatre had scarcely opened when, under order of the Court of Chancery, the funds were impounded, and Hammersleys the bankers, with Mr. Ford, were appointed receivers, and put in charge of all moneys taken at the doors. This was to satisfy debts owing to the shareholders. When they had been paid, they continued to act on behalf of the other creditors, and contended that this was the effect of the order appointing them. Sheridan, affecting to take up the cause of the actors, who, he insisted, should be first paid, brought the matter before the court, here exhibiting his usual indiscretion. A damaging *exposé* was now to be made of his whole conduct.

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was allowed as the value of Mrs. Richardson's, the widow's, share, with the explanation that the whole value of the share had never been paid for. As about half the value was paid to each of the partners, £6,000 would represent a little more than half of the moneys subscribed by the friendly dukes and lords.

Either through vanity or policy, he took the course of appearing in person to argue his case, in opposition to a bar of distinguished lawyers. It is strange that Mr. Moore should have glossed over a transaction so damaging to his hero. Mr. Mansfield, a leading counsel of the day, was unsparing in his denunciations, and pitilessly set out the whole of Sheridan's mismanagement, and waste of the enormous sums entrusted to him. It turned out that to the Duke of Bedford, no less a sum than £8,000 was owing for rent, and that a distress on the furniture and properties was at that moment being put in.* If the claims were not settled, these would be sold within a week. Grubb's counsel, who also opposed Sheridan, accused him publicly of having received an immense sum of money, nearly £300,000, of which only about £100,000 was accounted for. Holland, the architect of the house, complained that he had been assured by Sheridan that he had £80,000 in hand to commence with, to say nothing of the sale of private boxes. Sheridan took little notice of the facts and accusations made against him, relying upon assevera-

* Sheridan himself, unconscious of the folly of such a confession, told how he had made a proposal to the Duke of Bedford to take the rent (£10) each night, which the agent wrote to agree to. Sheridan never carried out the agreement, and protested that the agent had not answered him. On examination, the letter of acceptance was found among a heap of unopened letters in Sheridan's desk !

tions as to his own character, etc. Mr. Charles Butler, the eminent lawyer, was concerned in this case, and was greatly impressed by the display of Sheridan's powers. 'The court,' he says, 'was crowded: Sheridan spoke during two hours, with amazing shrewdness of observation, force of argument, and splendour of eloquence; and as he spoke from strong feeling, he introduced little of the wit and prettiness with which his oratorical displays were generally filled. While his speech lasted, a pin might be heard to drop. But it did not prevent Mr. Mansfield from making a most powerful reply. He exposed, in the strongest terms, the irregularity of Mr. Sheridan's conduct as manager of the theatre; and the injuries done by it to the proprietors and creditors.'

When the Chancellor came to deliver judgment, he severely rebuked Sheridan, though he appeared to pity the calamities of a man so abusing his talents. He decided in favour of the trustees, and concluded by conjuring Sheridan to think seriously of the words with which Dr. Johnson concludes his 'Life of Richard Savage,' that 'those who, in confidence of superior capacities or attainments, disregard the common maxims of life, will be reminded that nothing will supply the want of prudence; and that negligence and irregularity long continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius con-

temptible.' This significant incident should be borne in mind by those who hold Sheridan to have had merely trivial failings. These were on a wholesale scale, and the fact of his being thus reprimanded in a public court was an exceptional circumstance indeed. 'He left the place,' says his friend Kelly, 'amidst the loud congratulations of his friends, and the envy and discomfiture of his enemies. He walked with me to my house in Pall Mall, where he dined, and told me that he should have spoken better if I had not kept him up so late the night before.'

The commentary of a charming actress on this exhibition is curious. 'He has now,' Mrs. Inchbald writes, 'with only one short speech—but, I am told, appropriate both in sense and address, as if delivered by Milton's Devil—so infatuated all the Court of Chancery, and the whole town along with them, that everybody is raving against poor Hammersley—the banker and companion of Sheridan; *all except his most intimate friends, who know all particulars; they shake their heads, and sigh! Kemble, unable to get even* £500 *out of* £4,000, packed up his boxes, gave a parting supper to his friends, and ordered his chaise at seven o'clock the next morning. As they were sitting down to supper, "pop! he comes, like the catastrophe." Mr. Sheridan was announced; Kemble and he withdrew to the study, and the next morning I heard all was settled.'

Among other ventures not so successful, Sheridan had allowed himself to be caught by the arts of the designing Shakespearian forger, Ireland. He was drawn into his schemes by the hope of making a serious *coup*, though Ireland himself tells us that the manager did not care to enter very earnestly into the question of the genuineness of the article offered. Even after accepting the piece, 'Vortigern,' he seemed to throw as many obstacles as possible in the way of producing it. The manager's procrastinating arts, his failure to 'keep appointments' with the fretful author, or rather *owner*, his forgetfulness, etc., are all illustrated in the MS. papers which have been preserved relating to its production.*

* These are to be found in the British Museum, and are characteristic. We find 'R. B. S.' (in June, 1795) 'putting off the pleasure of hearing "Vortigern" read,' and on the 7th Ireland complaining bitterly of disappointments 'in meeting Mr. S. to settle.' When the play was put in rehearsal, without the new scenery that had been promised, a written order was at last obtained from Sheridan directing the scene-painter, Greenwood, to proceed at once with the work. This, it seems, was 'totally disregarded,' the painter saying that 'consistently with the orders from the house he could not pay it any attention.' This shows the general want of discipline. 'I am confident,' wrote Sheridan, 'I shall not fail to-morrow'—an inversion that is truly characteristic. At last the agreement was settled, by which the author was to receive half the profits during the first forty nights, and a sum down. When the money came to be paid, which was to be on signing, there was the usual difficulty in getting Sheridan to attend. 'We are so circumstanced here that

The tremendous fiasco of that night's performance, Kemble's studious indifference, and attempt to wreck

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it must be at twelve to-morrow that we must meet, and the money will be ready. I assure you I have returned to town on this business, so don't accuse me of unpunctuality.' On the point of submitting the piece to Kemble, the whole had nearly made shipwreck, as the author-owner made every objection and pretext against so doing. Then came complaints as to the form of advertisement. 'You carefully avoid mentioning the name of Shakespeare in your advertisement. This is an injury to my property.' Another grievance was: 'I now hear that at the rehearsal several passages *were sneered at.*' He next asked for the liberty of introducing a few friends at rehearsal 'who may with candour serve the cause.' But he was told plainly that 'if any strangers accompany him, performers will certainly decline repeating their parts.' He then received this notice from the great tragedienne herself: 'Mrs. Siddons' compliments to Mr. Ireland; she finds that "Vortigern" is intended to be performed next Saturday, and begs to assure him that she is very sorry the weak state of her health, after almost six weeks of indisposition, renders her incapable of even going to the necessary rehearsals of the play, much less to act. Had she been fortunately well, she would have done all in her power to justify Mr. Ireland's polite sentiments on the subject, when she had the honour of seeing him on Saturday.' On the eve of performance Ireland had prepared an advertisement, when a peremptory notice came from the other great pillar of the house: 'Mr. Kemble has sent back his opinion as follows: "If it is done it will effectually damn the play. Tell Mr. Ireland my opinion, and let him act as he pleases."' All this shows that long before its performance the piece was foredoomed to failure, and that, behind the curtain, it was held to be a mere piece of charlatanry.

Among the Drury Lane MSS. is preserved the following balance-sheet of the first night's receipts:

the piece, repeating slowly, 'And when this solemn mockery is over,' are well known.

But Sheridan—always versatile—had other plans in view to add attraction to his bills. The extraordinary taste for German drama and *diablerie* which set in at the close of last century was destined for many years to come to give a lurid cast to the English drama, and colour even some entertaining comedies. It was taken advantage of by Sheridan with his usual adroitness, and to this taste we owe three well-known pieces, 'The Castle Spectre,' 'The

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1796. *Saturday, 2nd April.*

'VORTIGERN' AND 'GRANDMOTHER.'

First account :

Paid :

| | | £ | s. | d. | | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Box . . | 1,134 | 340 | 10 | 0 | 165 | 24 | 15 | 0 |
| Pit . . | 784 | 130 | 18 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| First gallery | 457 | 45 | 14 | 0 | 17 | 0 | 17 | 0 |
| Top gallery | 224 | 11 | 4 | 0 | 19 | 0 | 9 | 6 |
| | | £528 | 6 | 0 | | 26 | 9 | 6 |
| | | | | | Total, | £554 | 15 | 6 |
| | | | | | After money, | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| | | | | | | 555 | 6 | 6 |
| | | | | | | 350 | 0 | 0 |
| | | | | | | 205 | 6 | 6 |
| | | | | | | 0 | 0 | 11½ |
| | | | | | | 102 | 13 | 3 |

RD. PEAKE.

Stranger,' and 'Pizarro,' all of which had extraordinary success. His cleverness in hitting the public taste was also shown in bringing out such pieces as 'The Caravan,' a sort of Eastern spectacle, in which a performing dog, 'Carlo,' used to jump into theatrical waters and save some one from drowning.* This drew all the town. 'The Castle Spectre,' 'Pizarro,' and 'Tekeli' were really the very best plays of their kind that could have been selected, and brought great sums to the treasury. This seems the answer to the oft-proposed question why Sheridan had ceased to furnish pieces of his own. He knew well that no comedy he could produce could have the favourable chance enjoyed by 'The School for Scandal' in Garrick's old and convenient theatre, the expression of the features and the tones of the voice being lost in so vast a house. Here escapes from prison, ghosts, battles, etc., were now shown, as in 'Timour the Tartar,' and Hook's 'Tekeli;' and though, in the case of 'The Stranger,' there was nothing of this, the situations were so novel to the public as at once to absorb and retain the attention

* The pleasant author, Reynolds, describes in his natural, amusing way how the success of the piece for the moment hovered in the balance, but was saved by—the dog. Mr. Sheridan, rushing behind the scenes, and calling out, 'Where's my preserver?' Reynolds modestly came forward, on which Sheridan said impatiently, 'Pooh, not you; but the dog!' Another version represents Dignum, the singer, coming to tell of his failure of voice as a terrible misfortune, and Sheridan making this reply to him: 'Is that all? I thought it was the dog!'

of the audience without much regard to the diction. 'The Castle Spectre'—the work of a young man called 'Monk' Lewis, from his licentious novel—produced in 1796, had an extraordinary success from the picturesqueness of its effects and its supernatural tone, akin to that of our modern 'Corsican Brothers.' Nowadays a performance of Lewis's play would be flat, poor, and in parts ludicrous. The reason of the failure of this and many other revivals is that the art of putting them on the stage is lost or forgotten; the players are not in the spirit of the time which produced the piece; the sentiments and emotions are foreign, and the effects, from habit, too familiar to the audience. 'The Stranger,' with its comparatively mild 'immorality,' offers a contrast that is almost amusing to the highly spiced vice of such pieces as 'The Lady of the Camellias' and 'Peril.' Yet the people of that and a succeeding generation were shocked at the spectacle of an unfaithful wife being reconciled at the close of the play; and in obedience to this feeling, the end was often softened or made indistinct, the unhappy pair moving away after an embrace, not giving any indication whether they were reconciled or not. 'The Stranger' was translated literally from the German by Benjamin Thompson, and the translation was then treated by Sheridan, who went over it, 'touching it up' all through.*

* Mr. Patmore had before him an act of 'The Stranger,' a literal translation from the German—'the prompter's copy,

It was Sheridan's unlucky fate, whenever he was successful in competition, to be often accused of having taken some unfair advantage. A Mrs. Plumptre had been employed by the booksellers to execute a translation of Kotzebue's plays, before Mr. Sheridan's version was brought out. He proposed to treat with the lady to delay her translation; but, as usual, neglected or forgot the matter until the book was on the eve of coming out. As he characteristically explained: 'All the notes and letters I receive are thrown into a bag, and I read them when I am at leisure. It so happened that a longer period than usual elapsed without my looking them over; but yesterday, when I went into the country, I took the bag with me, read the letters in the carriage, and there I found your note.' When he saw the lady he used all his

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with the numerous erasures, alterations, and interlineations, evidently in Sheridan's hand, who with practical skill had, by the substitution or addition of a few simple words and phrases, changed, as if by magic, the most helpless twaddle or platitudes into lively, sparkling, and dramatic dialogue.'

This accounts for the declaration which Rogers heard Sheridan make twice, that he had 'written every word of it.'

It was remarkable that in this play, when being performed at Liverpool later, Sheridan was to lose his excellent actor, Palmer, the original 'Joseph Surface,' in a very tragic way. He had lately lost his wife, and he was much sunk in spirits. It has been often repeated that after saying 'There is another and a better world,' he tottered and expired. But, by the testimony of the actor who was playing with him, it seems that the words were 'I left them (the children) at a town hard by.'

arts to get her to delay the publication, and also begged for a copy, which he largely used. It was said, indeed, that he paid the publisher £50; but the lady declared she had been 'swindled' out of the play, and the only remuneration she received was a *free ticket* 'in Brinsley's easy autograph,'* as Elia puts it. The well-known song, 'I have a silent sorrow here,' was written by the manager to a pathetic air by the Duchess of Devonshire, and was one of the attractions of the piece. Here, again, we have a further instance of Sheridan's infinite dramatic tact.†

But a really grand 'sensational' piece, which was to bring abundance to the treasury, was another translation from the German — the well-known 'Pizarro,' a most extraordinary combination of de-

* It was said the fifty pounds were paid in bags of shillings, sixpences, and halfpence, the receipts on successive nights of the shilling gallery. Though 650 guineas was offered for the piece, Sheridan preferred publishing on his own account, and was to receive a net £80 per 1,000 from the publisher. A vast number were sold. It is reported that the proceeds were chiefly absorbed by a debt to a livery-stable keeper.

† 'Lord Holland told us that when "The Stranger" was first performed he dined with Sheridan and Canning for the purpose of going to see it; and when S., pulling a bottle of wine from beside him, said, "I have a secret bottle here" (meaning to parody his own song in "The Stranger," "I have a silent sorrow here"), Canning remarked, "You know, S., those verses are Tickell's," and referred to the place they were taken from; on which S. answered, "But don't you know that I wrote most of those verses for Tickell?"'—*Moore's 'Diary.'*

clamation, bombast, and rescues, to which the two great Kembles condescended to contribute all their powers. It was amusing to find that was exactly the sort of piece Sheridan himself had ridiculed in his 'Critic,' 'Now for my grand processions,' etc.; but he had the excuse of 'needs must,' and nothing could be better done, or more skilfully adapted to its purpose. Most adroit, too, was his persuading his great classical players to undertake such characters.

It was remarkable, indeed, that in most of Sheridan's pieces his dilatoriness should have been so continuously displayed. When his little occasional piece, 'The Glorious First of June,' was in rehearsal, he was ostentatiously seated in a box, throwing down the words on scraps of paper written off on the moment. In the case of 'Pizarro,' his indolence was so great that some of the players received their parts only the day before, and Mrs. Jordan obtained her song on the night of performance. A friend carried Sheridan off to an inn at Bagshot, where he put together Rolla's famous speech, adapting to it some of his own old thunder.* Even on the very evening that it was first performed, the concluding portion remained un-

* With his characteristic economy he had worked a passage of his Hastings speech into this harangue, while the germ of the Hastings speech was later found in one of the classical writers!

finished. Sheridan wrote it at the Shakespeare Tavern in Covent Garden, not half an hour before the curtain drew up and the play commenced. The actors received and learned them before the ink was dry with which they were written.

Kelly, the composer of the music of 'Pizarro,' furnishes an extraordinary account of the author's careless and dilatory fashion of working. Everything was left to the last moment, or appeared to be so left; for this might have been intended as a sort of theatrical effect, with a view to raise the estimate of his capacity. 'Expectation was on tiptoe,' says Kelly; 'and strange as it may appear, "Pizarro" was advertised, and every box in the house taken, before the fourth act of the play was begun; nor had I one single word of the poetry for which I was to compose the music. Day after day was I attending on Mr. Sheridan, representing that time was flying, and that nothing was done for me. His answer uniformly was, "Depend upon it, my dear Mic, you shall have plenty of matter to go on with to-morrow;" but day after day, that morrow came not, which, as my name was *advertised* as the composer of the music, drove me half crazy.

'One day I was giving a dinner to the Earl of Guilford, the Marquis of Ormond, and others; and, about ten o'clock, when I was in the full enjoyment of this charming society, Mr. Sheridan appeared

before us, and informed my friends that he must carry me off with him, that moment, to Drury Lane; begged they would excuse my absence for one hour, and he would return with me. I saw it would be useless to contradict him, so I went to the theatre, and found the stage and house lighted up, as it would have been for a public performance; not a human being there, except ourselves, the painters, and carpenters; and all this preparation was merely that he might see two scenes, those of Pizarro's tent and the Temple of the Sun.

'The great author established himself in the centre of the pit, with a large bowl of negus on the bench before him; nor would he move until it was finished. I expostulated with him upon the cruelty of not letting me have the words to which I had to compose, not to speak of his having taken me away from my friends, to see scenery and machinery with which, as I was neither painter, nor carpenter, nor machinist, I could have nothing to do: his answer was, that he wished me to see the Temple of the Sun, in which the choruses and marches were to come over the platform. "To-morrow," said he, "I promise I will come and take a cutlet with you, and tell you all you have to do. My dear Mic, you know you can depend upon *me*, and I know that I can depend upon *you*; but these bunglers of carpenters require looking after." After this promise, we returned to my house. I found my party wait-

ing ; nor did we separate until five o'clock in the morning. To my utter surprise,' adds Kelly, with pleasant *naïveté*, 'the next day, according to his own appointment, Mr. Sheridan really came to dinner ; after the cloth was removed, he proposed business. I had pen, ink, music-paper, and a small pianoforte (which the Duke of Queensberry had given me, and which he had been accustomed to take with him in his carriage when he travelled), put upon the table with our wine. My aim was to discover the situations of the different choruses and the marches, and Mr. Sheridan's ideas on the subject ; and he gave them in the following manner. "In the Temple of the Sun," said he, "I want the virgins of the Sun, and their high priest, to chant a solemn invocation to their deity." I sang two or three bars of music to him, which I thought corresponded with what he wished, and marked them down. He then made a sort of rumbling noise with his voice (for he had not the slightest idea of turning a tune), resembling a deep gruff bow, wow, wow ; but though there was not the slightest resemblance of an air in the noise he made, yet so clear were his ideas of effect that I perfectly understood his meaning, though conveyed through the medium of a bow, wow, wow. Having done this, and pointed out their several situations, he promised me faithfully that I should have the poetry in a couple of days ; and, marvellous to say, he actually did send me Cora's song, which Mrs.

Jordan sang; and the trio, sung by Mrs. Crouch, Miss Decamp, and Miss Leak, "Fly away, time," which they made very effective. The poetry of the last, however, was written by my good friend Mr. Richardson; the song really by himself. Having extracted these, I saw that it was perfectly ridiculous to expect the poetry of the choruses from the author of the play; and as I knew a literary gentleman, whose poverty, if not his will, would consent to assist me, I gave him Mr. Sheridan's ideas, as I had caught them from his bow, wow, wows, and got him to write words to them, which he did very well; at least well enough to answer my purpose.

'But if this were a puzzling situation for a composer, what will my readers think of that in which the actors were left, when I state the fact that, at the time the house was overflowing on the first night's performance, all that was written of the play was actually rehearsing, and that, incredible as it may appear, until the end of the fourth act neither Mrs. Siddons, nor Charles Kemble, nor Barrymore, had all their speeches for the fifth? Mr. Sheridan was upstairs in the prompter's room, where he was writing the last part of the play while the earlier parts were acting; and every ten minutes he brought down as much of the dialogue as he had done, piecemeal, into the green-room, abusing himself and his negligence, and making a thousand winning and

soothing apologies for having kept the performers so long in such painful suspense.

'One remarkable trait in Sheridan's character was his penetrating knowledge of the human mind; for no man was more careful in his carelessness. He was quite aware of his power over his performers, and of the veneration in which they held his great talents; had he not been so, he would not have ventured to keep them (Mrs. Siddons particularly) in the dreadful anxiety which they were suffering through the whole of the evening. Mrs. Siddons told me that she was in an agony of fright; but Sheridan perfectly knew that Mrs. Siddons, C. Kemble, and Barrymore were quicker in study than any other performers concerned; and that he could trust them to be perfect in what they had to say, even at half an hour's notice. And the event proved that he was right; the play was received with the greatest approbation, and though brought out so late in the season, was played thirty-one nights; and for years afterwards proved a mine of wealth to the Drury Lane treasury, and, indeed, to all the theatres in the United Kingdom.'

The success of the piece was extraordinary indeed. It ran thirty nights, and it was said that the first season alone brought in £15,000 profit. But the acting was really fine; and we can see from the spirited picture of Lawrence how effective was Kemble in Rolla—his figure, grace, and declama-

tion winning all hearts irresistibly.* The author, however, was filled with nervous anxiety as to Mrs. Siddons, who he was convinced would fail in her part. Sheridan took advantage of the opportunity to advertise his new-born patriotic zeal, putting plenty of national sentiment and exhortation to repel invaders, etc., into Rolla's speeches. He also publicly attested his affection for his wife in the following 'elegant' inscription :

'To her whose approbation of this drama, and whose peculiar delight in the applause it has received from the public, have been to me the highest gratification its success has produced, I dedicate this play.—RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.'

* 'The portrait of Mr. Kemble bearing off the child,' says Boaden, who witnessed the performance, 'expresses most accurately the vigour and picturesque beauty of his action. The herculean effort of his strength—his passing the bridge—his preservation of the infant, though himself mortally wounded, excited a sensation of alarm and agony beyond anything perhaps that the stage has exhibited.'

Among his audience was Mr. Pitt, who smiled significantly at the speech of Rolla ; recognising some favourite figures that he had *before* admired at the trial of Mr. Hastings.

## CHAPTER II.

### A RECORD OF DEBT.

THESE several strokes of fortune seemed to neutralize the effect of former mistakes, and for fourteen or fifteen years more the theatre was somehow kept going. But no one could have guessed the desperate struggle that was going on behind the scenes, the manager being in the most piteous straits. The treasurer for many years was the worthy Richard Peake—a gentleman who, had he ever written his memoirs, could have given the most extraordinary picture of his employer, and have found his life a burden, pressed as he was from all sides, by actors, authors, Sheridan himself, and Sheridan's family.

This 'Dicky' Peake was a character in his way, a successful writer of plays, and author of the well-known 'Miller and his Men,' a piece no doubt borrowed from the Germans. The late Mr. Planché knew him, and described his happy gift of fitting his actors; and though he had no wit, he could put plenty of 'fun' into his farces. 'These were usually

damned on the first night, and recovered themselves wonderfully afterwards. His extreme good-temper and obliging nature made him a universal favourite. When his later manager, Arnold, lost all in the conflagration of the Lyceum Theatre, he generously thrust a bond for £200 into the fire, saying, "Let this go, too."' He died poor, 'a singular circumstance,' adds the genial Planché, a little oddly, 'considering he had been so many years treasurer of a theatre;' but a natural one, considering he had been Sheridan's treasurer.

We might feel hesitation in lifting the veil which has hitherto cloaked the follies and shifts of this otherwise eminent person in this direction; and no doubt it will be urged that these things should be kept in obscurity. It might be thus in the case of another; but in Sheridan's instance they were part of his system, were of his own nature, and inseparable from himself. Any suppression would give but a false idea of his character. As Mr. Boaden tells us: 'As a manager of a great theatre, he seemed to account theatre, actors, plays, and all, as so many notes-of-hand or pledges by which he was to raise money. He had no shame himself as to these matters. Money he would have, at any sacrifice, to gratify the craving of the moment.' It was strange indeed to find in a man of the world such a passionate love of pleasure, that had to be consulted at all cost of dignity and future suffering. He was

moreover not far off fifty years old, yet he seemed to think he had no responsibility to anyone under his rule. Is the man who inflicted such incalculable sufferings and sorrows on those under him, and on those connected with him, not only to escape detection and reprobation, but to be held out as an amiable *viveur*, slipping into follies owing to pressure of events, and redeeming all by his good-nature, graces of manner, and pleasant, social gifts? Surely not! There is no likeness, it will be seen, to his own 'Charles Surface,' who was a generous, amiable fellow. Charles would not sell Sir Oliver's picture; but Sheridan redeemed his wife's portrait for exhibition by borrowing the money from a relative!

Let us now proceed to enter the Drury Lane theatre, and we shall arrive at a fair idea of his true life. The chief sufferers and victims were the fine pair of performers, Mrs. Siddons and her brother, who, though pillars of the house, were treated with indifference and neglect. Kemble was stage-manager. But almost his first official act was a blunt announcement that 'his sister would not go on in "King John" unless £50 was sent to her that day. He had to implore money for colours and a little canvas.' One of his own appeals to Peake ran: 'It is now two days since my necessities made me send to you for £30. My request has been treated with a disregard I am at a loss to account for. I shall certainly go and act my part to-night;

but unless you send me a HUNDRED POUNDS before Thursday, *I will not act on Thursday;* and if you make me come begging again, it will be for TWO HUNDRED POUNDS before I set my foot in the theatre.' He was often heard angrily complaining to his friends, 'I know him thoroughly—all his tricks and artifices;' and he would threaten to go to the 'Society of the Friends of the People,' and stand up there and expose him!* Often the *costumiers* and other 'furnishers' positively refused to supply a single article unless Kemble gave his personal engagement, which he had to do. On one occasion he was actually arrested on one of these undertakings, his manager having left him 'in the lurch.' This could not be excused as the heedlessness of youthful folly; it was cruel and designing. On this occasion Kemble's patience gave way. He shook the dust off his shoes, and resigned his office. The great actress, his sister, though drawing all the town to the house, presently found her situation so disagreeable, that at the close of her brother's first

* Mr. Boaden says: 'One would really conceive from some late narratives, that the *first* of all merits was the *art* of using the property of others—a *plausibility* that nothing could resist, purveying for NEED that ought *never* to have existed; and when I number the persons connected with the Drury Lane property, who have been ruined by their confidence in their matchless chief, and when I see the enormous treasure dissipated, no man could ever guess how, and perceive this great mistaken man himself, for the most part, living at the table of others,' etc.

year's management she determined to retire to the country. Sheridan declared they could well spare her, as the theatre was so strong in comedy; and, adds Mr. Campbell, 'Mr. Boaden thinks that this secession denoted some misunderstanding with her brother; but *I know, from the best authority, that she laid the blame of her retirement on nobody but Richard Brinsley Sheridan.*'

In his desperate straits for money, Sheridan is accused of having recourse to such expedients as announcing benefits and seizing the moneys taken at the doors. Prince Hoare told Haydon, the painter, of one sad instance of this kind. Sheridan had played this trick in the case of Storace's destitute widow, and he also tried the same device with Mrs. Siddons, who complained bitterly. Writing to a friend from the country, she says: 'When Drury Lane opens, who can tell? for it depends on Mr. Sheridan, who is uncertainty personified. I have got no money from him yet; *and all my last benefit, a very great one*, was swept into his treasury, nor have I seen a shilling of it.' Her husband had been pressing him about the matter, and unless restitution was made they had determined to go to law. A third instance is also recorded of this dishonest intercepting of moneys intended for another. In 1796 we find further evidence as to the disastrous state of the theatre in this simple announcement: 'Last night,' says one of the newspapers, 'the Siddons and the

Kemble, at Drury Lane, acted to vacancy; the hollow sound of their voices was the most dreary thing in the world.' Mrs. Siddons, as usual, was the chief sufferer. 'On the 9th of November, 1796, she writes thus to a friend: "I am, as you may observe, acting again; but how much difficulty to get my money! Sheridan is certainly the greatest phenomenon that Nature has produced for centuries. Our theatre is going on, to the astonishment of everybody. Very few of the actors are paid, and all are vowing to withdraw themselves: yet still we go on. Sheridan is certainly omnipotent."' Two years later she speaks in still greater alarm and despondency: '*I can get no money from the theatre. My precious two thousand pounds are swallowed up in that drowning gulf, from which no plea of right or justice can save its victims.*' Yet such was his insinuating power that he contrived to soothe or beguile the angry players, and Mrs. Siddons used often to relate, half bitterly, half amused, this instance of his art:

'On one occasion he had run so deeply into arrears with Mrs. Siddons that she signified to him that, until they were paid up, she positively would not again appear. Sheridan made some jocular reply. No more notice was taken by him of this conversation, and Mrs. Siddons' name appeared in the bill, as usual, to play Lady Macbeth. On the forenoon of the day on which this announcement was

made, she wrote to him simply repeating what she had before told him—that her determination was taken, that she would not appear, and it belonged to him to make some other arrangement for the evening. The play was not changed, however, nor was the slightest notice taken of Mrs. Siddons' letter, and she sat down to dinner. About six o'clock in the evening a messenger came, reminding her that she was announced to play Lady Macbeth that night, and expressing the astonishment of the management that she had not arrived. She returned a verbal answer, stating her resolution not to appear, and referring to Mr. Sheridan for her reasons. Then arrived Mr. Brandon, the principal box-keeper, with a message to the same effect, but a little more urgent. His remonstrances, however, were equally ineffectual. Mrs. Siddons had taken her resolution; Mr. Sheridan had been apprised of it in time, and might now act as he thought proper. In a short time the orator himself was announced, and entered to try his powers of persuasion upon the lady. "The audience were collecting, the curtain about to rise; 'Macbeth,' and no other play, was to be acted, and Mrs. Siddons must make her appearance in it." "The audience might collect, the curtain might rise; 'Macbeth' might be played, but Mrs. Siddons would not perform in it." "No sufficient excuse could be made; the house expected to be gratified by Mrs. Siddons' performance; and the

theatre would be torn to pieces if the house was disappointed. Mr. Sheridan would take no denial; *he would make such representations*," he said, "*as would throw the whole blame upon Mrs. Siddons; she would risk her popularity, she would injure an old friend.*" In short, he remonstrated and flattered alternately, and ended by handing Mrs. Siddons into his carriage, driving off to the theatre, and arriving in time to meet the expectations of the audience.'

As a matter of course Kemble, on taking up his office, had soon the same complaints to make as his predecessor. He 'found himself greatly annoyed in his management, which he attributed to the indolence, often to the yielding good-humour, of Sheridan. He was, with the greatest difficulty, induced to retain his situation. Matters were carried in defiance of his judgment; and thus there were persons encouraged to contemn his authority. "I was present," says Boaden, "one night in Suffolk Street, when he announced his fixed, his unalterable determination. He expected Sheridan there after the House should be up, and aware of the great disarming powers of the orator, in a sort of inarticulate murmur, alarmed the party with the prospect of a scene; and, as some very excellent claret was near him, he proceeded to fortify himself for the engagement. At length Sheridan arrived, took his place next to Mrs. Crouch at the table, looked at Kemble

with kindness, but the kindness was neither returned nor acknowledged. The great actor looked unutterable things, and occasionally emitted a *humming* sound like that of a bee, and groaned in the spirit inwardly. Crouch whispered two words in Sheridan's ear, which let him know, I believe, the *exact* cause of the present moody appearance of his manager. A considerable time elapsed, and frequent repetitions of the sound before mentioned occurred; when, at last, 'like a pillar of state,' slowly up rose Kemble, and in these words addressed the astonished proprietor: '*I am an eagle, whose wings have been bound down by frosts and snows; but now I shake my pinions, and cleave into the general air, unto which I am born.*'"' This extraordinary burst shows under what influence the great actor was at the time. 'He then deliberately resumed his seat, and looked as if he had relieved himself from insupportable thraldom. Sheridan knew the complacency of man under the notion of a fine figure; he rose, took a chair next to the great actor; and in two minutes resumed his old ascendency. The tragedian soon softened into his usual forgiving temper; and I am ashamed to say how late it was when, cordial as brothers, I took one arm of Kemble, and Sheridan the other, and resolutions were formed "that melted as breath into the passing wind."'

Mrs. Siddons' health and spirits suffered miserably

during a long course of years, owing to the anxieties and sorrows this unscrupulous man brought upon her. We can trace this through all her letters. Her brother's relations with Sheridan were not always of this harmonious kind. 'Sheridan,' says one of his convivial friends, Taylor, 'when sober, was cheerful and good-humoured. When he had drunk too much, he sometimes became misanthropic, splenetic, ready, and almost eager, to offend. Our mutual friend, Joe Richardson, who was a penetrating observer and knew Sheridan better than anybody, said that in his sullen fits he "would search his mind for the bitterest things that he could conceive," and freely give vent to them against the person at whom his temporary pique, or anger, might be directed.' Taylor then describes this curious scene: 'I will mention one instance that happened at Kelly's saloon in Pall Mall, which Kelly kindly concealed, but which I learned from Richardson. On this occasion he had taken offence against the late Mr. John Kemble, and had assailed him in the most bitter manner. Kemble had borne this venomous hostility for some time with great patience, and had pushed round the bottle in hopes that Sheridan might be tempted to drink away his anger; but finding that, as the lion lashes himself into fury, so Sheridan's rancour seemed to increase, unable to bear the provocation any longer, Kemble seized a decanter and threw it at Sheridan, who luckily

turned his head aside and escaped a blow which might otherwise have been fatal. The company then interfered, Sheridan apologized for his ill-humour, and as they were really both liberal-minded and good-natured men, they went out soon after in perfect amity together.'*

* It would have been hard after one of these quarrels to have resisted the advances of Sheridan, who would soothe his friend in this engaging way :

'DEAR KEMBLE,

'If I had not a real good opinion of your principles and intentions upon all subjects, and a very bad opinion of your nerves and philosophy upon some, I should take very ill indeed the letter I received from you this evening.

'That the management of the theatre is a situation capable of becoming *troublesome* is information which I do not want, and a discovery which I thought you had made long since.

'I should be sorry to write to you gravely on your offer, because I must consider it as a nervous flight, which it would be as unfriendly in me to notice seriously as it would be in you seriously to have made it.

'What I *am* most serious in is a determination that, while the theatre is indebted, and others, for it and for me, are so involved and pressed as they are, I will exert myself, and give every attention and judgment in my power to the establishment of its interests. In you I hoped, and do hope, to find an assistant, on principles of liberal and friendly confidence—I mean confidence that should be above touchiness and reserve, and that should trust to me to estimate the value of that assistance.

'If there is anything amiss in your mind not arising from the *troublesomeness* of your situation, it is childish and unmanly not to disclose it to me. The frankness with which I have always dealt towards you entitles me to expect that you should have done so.

'But I have no reason to believe this to be the case ; and

Sheridan must have delighted, in his embarrassments, to find that his late manager was actually thinking of taking a share in the theatre. This was broached in 1801, and so unlooked-for an interposition, which might have brought *prestige* to his house, tempted him to set forth a roseate programme of its advantages—so roseate, indeed, that one would think he was speaking of one of the most flourishing institutions in the kingdom. It was proposed that Kemble should purchase a great share in the concern. The proposal was drawn up in a very 'flourishing' style, beginning with high compliments. 'Mr. Kemble is the person, of all others, who must naturally be desirous of both situations. He is at the head of his profession, without a rival; he is attached to it, and desirous of elevating its character. He may be assured of proper respect, etc., while I have the theatre; but I do not think he could brook his situation were the property to pass into vulgar and illiberal hands—an event which he knows contingencies might produce.' Sheridan then states the enor-

attributing your letter to a disorder which I know ought not to be indulged, I prescribe that you shall keep your appointment at the Piazza Coffee-house, to-morrow at five, and, taking four bottles of claret instead of three, to which in sound health you might stint yourself, forget that you ever wrote the letter, as I shall that I ever received it.

'R. B. SHERIDAN.'

In 1795, in succession to Kemble, Dr. Linley was appointed acting manager in the theatre, and we are told 'gave great satisfaction by his policy.'

mous progressive increase in the value of the shares of the patent. How he had bought of Garrick at the rate of £70,000 for the whole, of Lacy at the rate of £94,000 for the same, and of Dr. Ford at the rate of £86,000. Their receipts were about £60,000 a year, and could be raised to £75,000, in proof of which he enclosed the returns for three seasons.* He made a calculation that Kemble's salary as actor and manager, etc., would raise his whole profits to £4,690. Sheridan then offered to procure him a loan from his bankers for £10,000, and to be security for the same, and to give him any time or indulgence for the rest. As for the debts, he should not be accountable, and to this end all should be called in by public advertisement. According to Sheridan's statement, his own income from the theatre ought to have been £7,000 or £8,000 a year, which, after paying interest, debts, etc., should have left him a fine margin. Kemble, fortunately for himself, declined these tempting offers owing to the good offices of his lawyer, Morris, who found the title defective. Later he embarked in Covent Garden with no very prosperous result.†

* The receipts of Covent Garden Theatre were in 1810-11, £98,110; in 1811-12, £88,703, which gives an idea of what these large theatres brought in. At the Lyceum, under Mr. Irving's management, £100,000 has been taken in a year.

† During the long discussion that followed, some interesting details as to the theatrical profits were given. Thus it was stated, on the first night of the season at Drury Lane £648 was taken

But now to turn to the hapless 'Dicky Peake,' the baited treasurer, whose papers have been preserved, offering a truly piteous picture of the life of the impecunious—letters, scraps, bills, all to one tune, written also by various members of the Sheridan family—the father, the wife, and the son. The treasurer's duty in an ordinary theatre is to receive and pay the moneys to actors and others. But what treasurer has ever had such duties as his? When a crisis was imminent and matters desperate, such appeals as this poured in: 'Be the consequences ever so bad, you must send me £20 by the bearer.' 'I must rely on your concerting measures with Burgess, *respecting my taxes.* It is the only personal service and assistance I will ask of you.' One of the most characteristic instances is the following: Sheridan had attended at the annual St. Patrick's dinner, when, after much speech-making and flourishing, the usual collection was made, and the secretary duly read out, '*Mr. Sheridan twenty guineas*'—no doubt to much applause. Next day we find a hurried despatch to 'Dicky Peake': '£21 is to go to Hammersley's (bank) by nine in the morning, *to answer my draft for the St. Patrick's Society!*' So he had no 'effects' to his credit at the moment of sending in his subscription. He needed it

at the doors. Forty nights in succession during the last season produced an average of £313, which shows what a remunerative enterprise it might have been made.

himself far more; but it had to be scraped up and paid in before nine in the morning. Poor Lacy, his late partner, however, seems to have been left 'in the lurch,' as it is called, for we find Sheridan writing to him in these comforting terms: 'Burgess has gone off to Cornwall, and not left me the attorney's name; send it to me immediately, and *you shall be released* this evening, and then I shall have good tidings for you.' Again to Peake: 'Burgess's £70 will cripple you a little, for I must have £220 out of the £500, and I shall *be dreadfully distressed if I have it not* this evening. I really must make it a point that you take up your acceptance from Lacy; it distresses him beyond measure. Give Johnston a little money to go on with; keep as punctual with Kemble as you can. *We have settled the sequestration business.*'

Here is a bit of desperate pleading when the unfortunate manager was literally driven to the wall: 'I am so uneasy, I send Edwards back. I am sure you will do everything possible to keep things straight for a fortnight. *I am without a shilling* for Tom and Mrs. S. Try a few small loans as a personal favour to me. I never asked anyone but Mitchells. *Don't write me a croaking letter*, and you will see what a *lasting settlement* I will make on my return, so that you shall have no more of this anxiety.'

Michael Kelly, the singer, who performed in

many of the Drury Lane operas, had perhaps the best experience of the manager's shifts and devices. On one occasion Kelly rushed to his house betimes to tell him that the singers and performers would not play that night unless a sum of £2,000 was found to pay them. The manager had no money, as Kelly knew, and indeed the latter believed that the end at last had come. The other dressed leisurely, had his breakfast, during which he joked and laughed in excellent spirits, and then took the singer with him in his carriage to the bankers'. He remained a long time within, closeted with the partners; but at last the anxious singer saw him emerge smiling, and with a roll of new notes in his hand. By what magic he had contrived to obtain this sum, Kelly says he never could divine. But we find from another source, that he mortgaged the private boxes of the theatre to these very bankers for nearly the sum required, and probably this was the occasion.

In an auction catalogue of autographs was the following note, signed with initials only, making an appointment to meet a Mr. Shaw at Carlton House. It is endorsed by Shaw: 'N.B.—I went to Carlton House thrice, *but no Mr. S. had been there.*' This was characteristic enough.

'Friday, 4 o'clock.

'My dear Barclay,—I have just returned from Holland House, where I slept last night, and having

hastened to the bankers, lo! to my confusion, I am come from thence *re infectâ.* I can't tell you how this embarrasses me, having so confidently relied on finding the thing done, that I had given drafts for payments to-morrow. Pray, pray see it settled in the morning, and give me a few lines by bearer which I may send to Hare to-night.'

Mr. John Taylor supplies the rest of the story. He tells us: 'Mr. Shaw, though a friendly good-natured man, tired with frequent applications without success, called upon me, and said he wished to submit a statement of his situation and his correspondence with Mr. Sheridan to the public, observing that as it related to so conspicuous a character, it would attract much attention to any newspaper that contained it. He said that therefore he gave me the preference, requesting it might appear in the *Sun.* He was highly incensed, and it was with great difficulty I persuaded him to let me write to Mr. Sheridan on the subject, and endeavour to procure an amicable arrangement. At length he assented, and I wrote to Mr. Sheridan, who in his answer, which I have retained, desired me to appoint a meeting at my office between him and Mr. Shaw on the following Saturday. I accordingly wrote to Mr. Shaw for that purpose, and matters were settled, as I afterwards understood from Mr. Shaw, who told me that he had been able to obtain by my inter-

cession £400 of his money. At a subsequent period Mr. Shaw applied to me again, in hopes that I might succeed upon a similar occasion.'

Miss Pope could get no money, and had to sell out her capital and spend her savings. Even when the managers dined together, an order was given on the hapless Peake.* More amusing is Grimaldi's experience: 'I was walking one day,' says Mr. Angelo, 'with Tom King, in Pall Mall, when we met the celebrated clown, Grimaldi, father of the present Joe Grimaldi: approaching us with a face of the most ludicrous astonishment and delight, he exclaimed, "O vat a *clevare* fellow dat Sheridan is! Shall I tell you?—*oui*—yes, I vill. *Bien donc*—I could no never see him at de theatre, so *je vais chez lui*—to his house in Hertford Street, muffled in great-coat, and I say, '*Domestique!*—you hear?' 'Yes.' 'Vell, den, tell your master dat M. ——, de

* The bill ran thus:

'To Margaret Gower.

1797. To Messrs. Sheridan, Richardson, and Grubb—

| | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Haunch of Venison . . . | 0 | 12 | 0 |
| Skate and Flounders, dressed sauce . | 0 | 7 | 6 |
| Port . . . . . | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Sherry . . . . . | 0 | 4 | 6 |
| Waiter . . . . . | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| | £2 | 10 | 0 |

'*Mr. Peake, pay this bill.*'

Mayor of Stafford, be below.' *Domestique* fly—and on de instant, I be shown into de drawing-room. In von more minute, Sheridan leave his dinner-party, enter de room hastily, stop suddenly, stare, and say, 'How dare you, Grim, play me such a trick?' Then putting himself into a passion, he go on: 'Go, sare! —get out of my house.' 'Begar,' say I, placing my back against de door, 'not till you pay me my forty pounds;' and then I point to de pen, ink, and paper, on von small tables in de corner, and say, 'Dere!—write me de check, and de Mayor shall go *vitement —entendez vous?* If not, *morbleu*, I vill——' 'Oh!' interrupted dis *clevare* man, 'if I must, Grim, I must;' and as if he were *très pressé*—very hurry—he write de draft, and pushing it into my hand, he squeeze it, and I do push it into my pocket. Vell, den, I do make haste to de banker's, and giving it to de clerks, I say, 'Four tens, if you please, sare.' 'Four tens!' he say with much surprise; 'de draft be only for four pounds!' O! vat a *clevare* fellow dat Sheridan is!"' Sheridan, enjoying the joke, paid him the balance.

The following is a piteous lament; but who can pity one so accountable as he was for his own troubles? 'It is impossible to say the shame and distress you bring on me, when, after a few small payments are settled positively between us, you totally disappoint me, and make me a liar to my own servants. If what Home tells me is not true,

I shall turn him away; but he avers, after he sent the note, that Dunn said you would not come out of the boxes, or give any order in the treasury. The infamy I have suffered on account of Mrs. R.'s disappointments is not to be conceived, and here is Wood kept for days in town on account of the £15 draft and expenses, when a call of two minutes would have settled all.'

The faithful treasurer, who was so busy in contriving for others, was left without provision himself. The poor fellow is thus comforted by one of Brinsley's flourishings: 'You may positively assure your landlord that his rent shall be paid without fail.'

Now reappears his brother Charles, after so long an interval, drawn like the rest into his embarrassments. We find him writing to Peake in July, 1799, enclosing three bills to be left at Drummond's, according to Mr. Morris's desire: 'This was one of my brother's sleeping days; I waited half an hour longer after you had left the house, but he was still fast asleep, therefore came away without seeing him.' Again, on July 17, 'he is extremely surprised at not receiving the bills, and had remained in town to settle the business; he will not suppose it was inattention or deception in Mr. Peake, but he requests to know whether Mr. R. B. Sheridan gave any counter-orders to that effect.' He later writes to Mr. Ward, the secretary to Drury Lane, 'to know if the bond-

holders are about being paid off, as Mrs. Le Fanu, his aunt, holds several shares.'*

Here we find, combined, the spendthrift's carelessness and neglect, by which his debts were multiplied: 'Without fail, and immediately, give bearer five guineas to buy hay and corn for my coach-horses. *They have not had a morsel of either since last night.* I shall call on you presently.' Was it not strange that even his horses should thus have to bear their share of suffering from his improvidence?† Again, written from the 'Shake-

* Another awkward story that got into the papers was that Sheridan once 'fixed a Mr. Woodroof with a bail for £2,700, which the latter was left to pay. He said he would go to prison, but would print a copy of his case, and send it to every M.P. The thing was printed, but before it was put into circulation, some one from Mr. Sheridan called and settled the matter.

† This condition of his stable might seem disastrous enough. But what was the truth? Mr. Smyth inquired from his confidential servant, Edwards, whether there was a horse for him to ride. 'Horses!' said he, in a sort of paroxysm; 'there are at this moment seven of one kind or another at the livery-stable, and have been there six months, and I can neither get money from master to pay for their keep, nor an order from him to sell one of them.' A poor livery-stable man was pressing for his debt, himself pressed by 'the King's taxes.' Sheridan had sent for his carriage, which was now refused unless payment was sent. On which he ingeniously begged that his wife would drive in it herself to his house, when the bill would be paid. She was shown into a room where lunch was laid, and the door being closed, Sheridan walked out, got into the carriage, and drove away! This may excite a smile; as does the well-known story of his simulated admiration of a horse on which an eager dun was mounted, and his getting him

speare :' 'You must positively come to me here, and bring £60 in your pocket. Fear nothing. Be civil to all claimants, for, trust me, in three months there will not exist an unsatisfied claimant. Shut up the office, and come here directly.'

Sheridan's unhappy father-in-law, Dr. Linley, lived on to share in these dreadful difficulties. But he did not feel them so much as he did the fate of his children, who, as has been already mentioned, were destined to die in succession, in some disastrous way, and leave him bare indeed. His pupil, the much-admired, fair and frail Mrs. Crouch, describes his sorrows pathetically : 'Poor Mr. Linley ! After the death of one of his sons, when seated at the harpsichord in Drury Lane Theatre, in order to accompany the vocal parts of an interesting little piece taken from Prior's "Henry and Emma," by Mr. Tickell, and excellently

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to set off on a trot or gallop, to exhibit the horse's paces, when he walked away. If a number of duns called in the morning and refused to leave, he would have them shown into various rooms, then asking, 'Were the doors shut?' would pass out. Kelly tells us of his device for getting a new watch. He had broken many appointments with Harris, the manager, and arriving, as usual, some hours after time, he met Tregent, the watchmaker, coming out, who told him he had left a case of watches with Harris to choose some presents for the actors. When Harris attacked him for his unpunctuality, the ingenious Sheridan bewailed his poverty in not being able to afford himself a watch, etc. On which, Harris took out the case, and generously and kindly said, 'My dear Sheridan, let me supply you !'

represented by Mr. Palmer and Miss Farren, the tutor, Mr. Aickin, gave an impressive description of a promising young man in speaking affectionately of his pupil Henry; the feelings of Mr. Linley could not be repressed, the tears of mental agony rolled down his cheeks. Nor did he weep alone; the cause of his distress was too well known not to obtain the tears of sympathy from many who beheld *his* flow so fast.' She said that after Miss Maria Linley died, it was melancholy for her to sing to Mr. Linley, whose tears continually fell on the keys as he accompanied her; and if, in the course of her profession, she was obliged to practise a song which he had been accustomed to hear his lost Maria sing, the similarity of their manners and their voices, which he had *once* remarked with pleasure, then agonized him to such a degree, that he was frequently forced to quit the instrument, and walk about the room to recover his fortitude.

The family might well rue the day they left the pleasant city of Bath, seduced by Sheridan's wiles. There is extant a terribly significant letter, written to him by William Linley, which is an indictment of him for his neglect. It was dated April, 1793:*

* MS. British Museum. Mr. Harvey, by whose stores of MS. I have often benefited, informs me that at Mr. Lacey's sale, he purchased a strange, miscellaneous bundle of Sheridan's papers, among which were a number of these appeals from the Linleys, full of the bitterest reproaches.

'I did not think,' it ran, 'I should ever have been compelled to address you in the form of a petition. We are in the greatest distress possible, and unless you immediately give an order to Mr. Westley to advance my arrears, and see that my small salary is paid me, I cannot afford my mother any assistance, who will consequently discharge her servants and remove to lodgings.'

After complaining bitterly how even his nominal duties and the opportunities for coming forward were taken from him, he says that he cannot look upon his situation without disgust, and that he must go back to India, as he could not afford himself a clean shirt and a decent coat. 'My sister is almost left destitute, both in respect to money and the necessaries of life. How should it be otherwise when for the last five months we have scarcely received a shilling from the theatre? My mother has good spirits, else, I believe, she would not be alive.'

This refers to the poor old wardrobe-keeper. Yet at this moment Sheridan was well in funds, for he was building his theatre, and there was abundance of cash.*

* There is a curious account of Sheridan in one of the early numbers of *Fraser's Magazine*, written by one who appears to have known him intimately, and who takes but a low view of his character. 'It was remarked,' he says, 'that he never could be induced to see any of his relatives, though many came over

Thus far as to the tragic side. Wives, players, great and humble connections, relations, friends, all could have contributed their tale of miseries. But there is another branch of this department, already frequently referred to, in which he made quite a reputation, and which seems to belong to the pleasant, airy characters of Comedy or Farce. Such are the amusing tales of devices for baffling tradesmen or obtaining money.

But here there is a distinction to be kept in view. It is often sought to extenua e Sheridan's failings by comparing him with Fox and other extravagant men of pleasure of his time. Those who suffered by Sheridan's faults were usually the humble class of tradesmen—persons who 'supplied families'—who had ever trusted him and who could ill afford to lose. Fox's creditors were all professional money-lenders, rapacious Jews—who knew what they were doing—with whom it was a commercial transaction. There is something unworthy in resorting to devices for securing goods and 'doing' these humbler creatures, as they are called, out of further supplies.

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specially to wait on this influential connection. A young fellow arrived from Chester, and though appointments were made, never succeeded in meeting Mr. Sheridan. One of his sisters, who came from Dublin, was treated in the same fashion. For one of the Homans, however, a young man who was connected with him, he procured a place in the Post Office. Neither did he care to associate with his own countrymen, unlike Burke, who ever retained his brogue and his Irish connection. This is evidence of character.'

As was said by a writer not long after his death, these shifts, though flavoured by humour and sportive spirit, come dangerously near to swindling: and there have been persons so unappreciative of a jest as to bring their authors within the law.

'He sent for Chalier on the day of a dinner-party,' Kelly tells us, 'and told him, that luckily he was just in cash, and desired to settle his account. Chalier was much pleased; but said, as he had not it about him, he would return home and bring it with him. Sheridan added, "Oh! Chalier, by-the-bye, you must stop and dine with me to-day; I have a party to whom I will introduce you—some leading members of both Houses." Chalier, who was fond of great company, was obliged to Sheridan for the offer, and promised to be with him at the hour of dinner. Upon his return home, he informed the clerk of his cellars that he was going to dine with Mr. Sheridan, and probably should not be home till it was late. Sheridan had fixed the hour at six to Chalier, but desired him to come before that time, as he had much to say to him in private. At about five o'clock Chalier came to his appointment; and he was no sooner in the house than Sheridan sent off a servant with a note to the clerk, desiring him, as Mr. Chalier was favouring him with his company, to send as soon as possible three dozen of burgundy, two dozen of claret, and two dozen of port, with a dozen of old hock. The clerk, knowing that his

master was really at Sheridan's, and thinking that the order came with his concurrence, immediately obeyed it. After dinner everybody praised the fine qualities of Sheridan's wines, and all were desirous of knowing who was his wine merchant. Sheridan, turning towards Chalier, said, "I am indebted to my friend here for all the wine you have tasted, and am always proud to recommend him." Next morning Chalier discovered the trick.'

The following is another instance of the same kind: 'An innkeeper at Richmond had some excellent burgundy, of which Sheridan ordered two dozen, at £8 a dozen. The innkeeper sent him this quantity; and Sheridan shortly after assured him he liked the wine so much that he would purchase the remainder. The other had no objection to sell the wine, but he insisted upon being paid for the first parcel before he sent out a second. This Sheridan promised to do, if he would call on a particular day at his house in Bruton Street. He was punctual; and as soon as Sheridan had him in the house, he ordered his carriage and set off at full speed for Richmond. On his arrival there, the wife of the innkeeper cried out, "Oh, Mr. Sheridan, how unlucky! My husband is just gone to town in search of you, and you have missed each other." "Oh no," said Sheridan; "I have seen your husband, my good woman, and we have arranged everything; so you have only to get me the rest of the burgundy, and have it packed up

immediately, that I may take it to town with me; for I have some friends to dine with me to-day, and can't wait." She packed up the wine and had it put into Sheridan's carriage, who returned to town about the same time that the innkeeper arrived at Richmond.'

Some of the tales that thus illustrate his ingenuity excite a smile, but should surely excite pity and contempt. These attempts were usually prompted by some display of hospitality or show, as in the story just related, when Sheridan was giving a dinner, and his wine merchant had refused to supply wine unless paid. Under such conditions hospitality is a deceit.

It was probably at the dinner to his friends for which he had so 'ingeniously' procured the wine that he contrived some further additions to the entertainment, procured under circumstances that resemble Honeywood's straits in 'The Good-natured Man.'

When Sheridan was living in Bruton Street, Sir N. Wraxall tells us he was so beset with duns or bailiffs that even the provisions requisite for his family were introduced over the iron railing down the area. 'In the course of the year 1786 he entertained at dinner a number of the Opposition leaders, though he laboured at the time under almost insurmountable pecuniary embarrassments. All his plate, as well as his books, were lodged in pawn. Having, nevertheless, procured from the pawnbroker an

assurance of the liberation of his plate for the day, he applied to Beckett, the celebrated bookseller in Pall Mall, to fill his empty bookcases. Beckett not only agreed to the proposition, but promised to ornament the vacant shelves with some of the most expensive and splendid productions of the British press, provided that two men, expressly sent for the purpose by himself, should be present. It was settled finally that these librarians of Beckett's appointment should put on liveries for the occasion, and wait at table. The company, having assembled, were shown into an apartment where, the bookcases being opened for the purpose, they had leisure, before dinner was served, to admire the elegance of Sheridan's literary taste, and the magnificence of his collection. When everything was ready for serving the dinner, it happened that, either from the pawnbroker's distrust, or from some unforeseen delay on his part, the spoons and forks had not arrived. Repeated messages were despatched to hasten them, and they at last made their appearance; but so critically and so late, that there not being time left to clean them, they were thrown into hot water, wiped, and instantly laid on the table. The evening then passed in the most joyous and festive manner. Beckett himself related these circumstances to Sir John Macpherson.'*

* 'Some years later,' Wraxall adds, 'Sheridan joined in a partnership with two ladies of the highest distinction, but whom

These now vacant shelves had been kindly filled by his friends.

'I recollect,' writes Moore, in his 'Diary,' 'many years ago hearing Sheridan say, at Donington Park, that he was about to form a library, and not being rich enough to buy books, he had signified to his friends that nothing would be more welcome to him than a gift of a set of books from each. Lord Moira at the time gave him a very handsome set.'

The same chronicler, after Sheridan's death, visited a pawnbroker in Wardour Street, named Harrington, and there found all these handsomely bound presents; and among them a number of borrowed volumes. 'It now appears,' says his friend, 'into what vortex all these gifts were swallowed.'

The stories of bailiffs in livery seem, as we have said before, humorous enough to belong to comedy, and indeed it is mentioned of Charles Surface that when he entertains his friends he will sit down to dinner 'with an officer behind each guest's chair.' This incident of bailiffs in attendance at Sheridan's dinner-party being once mentioned as a fable at Brocket Hall, Lord Palmerston remarked, to the

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I will not name, for the purpose of making purchases and sales, vulgarly called dabbling in the public funds. The speculation proved most unfortunate, as they *waddled*, and became *lame ducks*. Nor was the bankruptcy of the firm the only evil that followed this experiment; but the subject is too delicate to allow the disclosure of further particulars.'

astonishment of all, 'Not at all. *I was at it.*' He explained that at one of the dinners given by members of a little society, each at his own house, for the improvement of the English language, Sheridan gave the first, 'and I was attracted by the frequent appeals of the servants to *Mr. Sheridan.*' 'And did you improve the language?' 'Not certainly at the dinner, for Sheridan got drunk, and a good many words of doubtful propriety were employed.'

Again, Mr. Wilberforce, for instance, not given to reporting gossip or scandal, records the following:

'Michael Angelo Taylor,' he says, 'was left a good fortune by his father, who was a builder, and he got on by keeping a good cook and giving excellent dinners. I remember Sheridan playing off on him one of his amusing tricks. He did not know where to go for a dinner, so sitting down by Michael Angelo he said, "There is a law question likely to arise presently, on which from your legal knowledge you will be wanted to reply to Pitt, so I hope you will not think of leaving the House." Michael sat still with no little pleasure, while Sheridan slipped out, walked over to Michael's house, and ordered up dinner, saying to the servants, "Your master is not coming home this evening." He made an excellent dinner, came back to the House, and seeing Michael looking expectant, went to release him, saying, "I

am sorry to have kept you, for after all I believe this matter will not now come on to-night." Michael immediately walked home, and heard, to his no little consternation, when he rang for dinner, "Mr. Sheridan had it, sir, about two hours ago." '

Even if amused at this ingenuity, we cannot avoid feeling that the man who could play such a trick, and *invent* this legend for the purpose of a dinner, might not be inclined to stop there.

The same lax morality was applied to verbal 'conveyings,' and a cool appropriation of any happy allusions he chanced to hear was one of the practices of this universal borrower, picker, and stealer. As when his friend Fox showed him a happy classical allusion in likening the fable of Theseus, when a portion of the sitting figure was left behind, to the Ministerial situation, Sheridan pooh-poohed it, saying it was a 'pedantic fancy;' but a few days later made happy use of it in a debate.

'Once as he was walking to the House, Sir Philip Francis pithily remarked, that "it was a peace which everyone would be glad of, but no one would be proud of." Sheridan, who was in a hurry to get to the House, did not appear to attend to the observation; but, before he had been many minutes in his seat, he rose, and brought in the remark to much applause. So with his observation that "half the debt of England had been incurred in pulling down the Bourbons, and the other half in

setting them up;" a remark which he had picked up from Sir Arthur Pigott.'*

One who knew him well, and also had the keenest admiration for his talents, supplies the following terrible analysis of this side of his character, and attributes all his failures to lack of self-restraint: 'During the later years of his life I saw as clearly as I was capable of seeing anything, that he had at last arrived at that degraded state that literally *he would deny himself nothing;* that, great or small, whatever might be the object or the wish, no successful resistance could be procured from any sentiment of prudence or duty. No finer mind was ever entrusted to man, and originally, as I sincerely

* A good illustration of the Protean shapes assumed by these 'capital stories' of Sheridan, is the well-known anecdote of Lord Belgrave's Greek quotation. During one of the debates on the regency, this nobleman quoted a passage from Demosthenes, and was replied to by Sheridan, who declared that if he had gone on with the passage, he would have found it had a totally different meaning. He then rolled out some Greek words, much after the pattern of Ephraim Jenkinson's cosmogony quotation; and Mr. Fox is said to have complimented him, declaring that that meaning never occurred to him before. This quotation was, of course, a piece of buffoonery. There were other shapes of this story. As there was a good deal of ridicule cast upon the introduction of Greek in a speech to the House, it may have been that Sheridan took this mode of making the incident more ridiculous. But on turning to the debates, we find what must be the true version, viz., that he really quoted another passage of Demosthenes, to the effect that in their dissensions they were forgetting the enemy. Sheridan had no doubt gone out to consult his Demosthenes, and find something apropos. This was a common device of his.

believe, no better heart. To the last there was no malignity, no spirit of revenge, etc. With taste the most perfect, feelings the most refined and tender, he could be grossly sensual and recklessly cruel. With thoughts the most elevated and acute, and understanding inferior to none, he could condescend to conduct the most foolish and deplorably silly.'

Lord Holland furnished Moore with an extraordinary theory by way of excuse for these failings. 'One remarkable characteristic of S.,' he said, 'and which accounted for many of his inconsistencies, was the high ideal system he had formed of a sort of impracticable perfection in honour, virtue, etc., anything short of which he seemed to think not worth aiming at; and thus consoled himself for the extreme laxity of his practice by the impossibility of satisfying or coming up to the sublime theory he had formed. Hence the most romantic professions of honour and independence were coupled with conduct of the meanest and most swindling kind; hence, too, prudery and morality were always on his lips, while his actions were one series of debauchery and libertinism.'

This, and abundance of this sort of testimony, was in Moore's possession when writing his life. The ingenious plea might justify Joseph Surface, and even Tartuffe himself.

The victimized brother-in-law, after telling Mr. Moore 'other stories of Sheridan's trickery in money

matters, seemed willing to acquit him of any low, premeditated design in these various shifts and contrivances.' In justice to his character, it must be said that many joined in this testimony as to the absence of deliberation in Sheridan's shifts and devices. Mr. Lamb assured Moore that 'vanity was his reigning passion: no corruptness as to pecuniary motives about him.' Mr. Adair also thought that 'he did not really mean to cheat people in money matters, and that he always imagined he should be able to pay the debts he incurred; but new embarrassments banished all thoughts of providing for the former ones out of his head.' Such was the testimony of Sheridan's much-tried banker, Hammersley, 'with whom,' says Mr. Moore, 'I had some conversation about Sheridan's financial concerns with his house. He promised to talk with me more fully on the subject some other time, but said partly what Adair did, that he did not believe Sheridan really meant to cheat people out of their money.'

# CHAPTER III.

## POLITICAL INTRIGUES.

We now return to the political stage on which this versatile actor was all the while performing with energy and occasionally with some success. It was astonishing that a man sunk in such straits and difficulties as we have been recounting, should have had spirit for following Parliamentary life. But it may be said that so happy a temper is the result of an indifference which in itself produces the evils spoken of.

The uncertainty of his royal patron's favour and the mistrust of his friends might be held accountable for the new attitude assumed by Sheridan at the beginning of the century, when he reappears before the reader. This, of course, was connected with that tendency to 'patriotic' opinions which he had now begun to display.

It was unfortunate, however, that he should have selected as the object of his new adherence so feeble a personage as Mr. Addington. When that Minister

in so bizarre a fashion took the place of Mr. Pitt, he was to find unexpected support in Sheridan. Sheridan himself always accounted for this by his dislike to Pitt, to whom he thought anyone was preferable. Dean Pellew, Lord Sidmouth's biographer, suggests higher motives : 'Mr. Sheridan's assistance was spontaneous and disinterested ; he neither received nor, as far as the author can ascertain, expected any office or other return from Mr. Addington.'* Indeed it was added, 'His accession appears to have been occasioned solely by respect for the Minister, and approbation of his measures and conduct ; and from this period may be dated a cordial intimacy between the parties, not quite amounting perhaps to friendship, but far exceeding the bounds of common acquaintance, which survived all subsequent political changes.'

'There is no man who has told me more painful truths than you have, and yet you will do me the justice to believe, that there is no one for whom I feel more respect and regard. I have too many irregularities in private life to reproach myself with, but I may safely say that my conscience is clear

* So notorious became his devotion that I find from an autograph catalogue, that 'Sheridan gave his note for £50, on which Sir Matthew Bloxham, banker, advanced the money, on an idea that Sheridan could serve his *views with Mr. Addington.* The note *was not paid.* The endorsement on Richardson's letter, after his death, is highly characteristic. *Bloxham lost his money.*'

towards my country,' used Sheridan to say to his new friend. He was often found at the Prime Minister's dinners at Richmond Park, and on one occasion made this remarkable declaration, 'My visits to you may be possibly misconstrued by my friends, but I hope you know, Mr. Addington, *that I have an impenetrable mind.*'

The King had not visited the theatre for years, but commanded 'Pizarro,' when Sheridan exhibited the most ardent loyalty, for which he was much ridiculed in caricatures. But the 15th of May, 1800—an extraordinary day of agitation for the Royal Family—was to furnish still further opportunity for the display of Sheridan's loyalty. In the morning there had been a grand review in Hyde Park, when one of the soldiers' muskets discharged a ball-cartridge, which wounded a spectator. The King was but a few yards away. This may have been an accident; but on the same night his Majesty, the Queen, and all the Princes being at Drury Lane to see the play of 'She Would and she Wouldn't,' the King was in the act of bowing to the audience, when a man in the pit, Hadfield, stood up and fired a horse-pistol at the King, an incident perhaps unique in stage history. Nothing could exceed the courage of the King, who advanced to the front of the box and bowed to the shouts of the audience. He insisted on remaining for the whole entertainment. The assassin, who proved

to be insane, was dragged into a room behind the scenes, where he was examined in presence of Sheridan and the Princes. The versatile manager, as usual, gave a pleasant, original turn to the opportunity now put in his way. In a few moments he had pencilled an apropos verse for 'God Save the King,'* about to be sung as the curtain rose, and put it into Kelly's hands, who gave it forth to the delight of the audience.

The intimacy with Addington seemed to favour this tendency of Sheridan to stand well with the Court and with his Majesty. With the latter, Addington was in the highest favour and even affection. In a letter to Addington, we find Sheridan quite effusive in his loyalty: 'I trust I need not add, that whatever small portion of fair influence I may at any time possess with the Prince, it shall be uniformly exerted to promote those feelings of duty and affection towards their Majesties, which, though seemingly interrupted by adverse circumstances, I am sure are in his heart warm and unalterable—and, as far as I may presume, that general concord through-

* 'From every latent foe,
From the assassin's blow,
God save the King.
O'er him Thine arm extend,
For Britain's sake defend
Our father, Prince, and friend.
God save the King.'

So popular was this extempore, that it was published and republished in various editions.

out his illustrious family, which must be looked to by every honest subject as an essential part of the public strength at this momentous period.' His plays were always relished at Court, and in one of the Queen's letters to Lord Harcourt, we find 'my favourite Sir Peter Teazle' quoted.

Sheridan's conduct in the mutiny, so highly praised, had strengthened this favourable regard, and in an interview with his son, the King, asking who had called to inquire after his health, said that 'Mr. Fox had not been, but that Mr. Sheridan had, *who he verily thought had a respect and regard for him*;' particularly dwelling on his conduct at Drury Lane Theatre, when the attempt was made on his Majesty's life by the madman who had been in the Dragoons.

This alliance with Addington was highly characteristic, for it afforded him an opportunity of assailing Mr. Pitt, on the ground that '*he would have done worse.*' It was on one well-known occasion in December, 1802, that Sheridan gave his substantial aid on the question of additional forces. Here he won great praise for his wit and vigour. He was disgusted to find that instead of voting for vigilant preparation, there was a call from certain persons to 'give us back our places.' What advantage would there have been from the change? They would have done exactly the same thing. They seem to think, now that the present Ministers have arranged for peace, they should make way for them, 'as though

one were a goose-quill and the other a stick of sealing-wax, which are done with and ought to be thrown under the table. We know Touchstone says, as a good ground for quarrel, that "he don't like the cut of a certain courtier's beard." Perhaps this capricious dislike cannot be better exemplified than in the well-known epigram of Martial, "Non amo te," etc. An English parody may be more applicable to these gentlemen :

> '"I do not like thee, Dr. Fell :
> The reason why I cannot tell ;
> But this I'm sure I know full well,
> I do not like thee, Dr. Fell."

It is fair, sir, to say that this parody, so unfavourable to the Doctor, proceeds from the mouth of a fair lady'—was this his wife?—'who has privileges to like and dislike, which ill-become a member of this House.'

This sally caused unbounded delight, and is repeated to this day. It will be seen, however, that Sheridan did not apply it ill-naturedly to Addington, as is often supposed, but only with a sly sub-allusion. The Tories were in ecstasies. 'No language can describe Sheridan,' says Mr. Ward—'most argumentative, most English, and most witty! The latter blazing absolutely from beginning to end! None but himself could have called Addington "Doctor" to his face. He panegyrized Ministers, and called for plain language as to Pitt, insinuating not

the fact, but the possibility, of his participation in the measures of his friends, at the same time confessing that he believed the pride and dignity of his mind was above it. The incompatibility of a union between him and the Grenvilles was strongly pressed; he *bespattered his and their Administration, and defended the present, with a power proportionate to the weakness with which the former were defended by the latter.*'

Others of his sallies were equally good, as when he asked what did they want the present Prime Minister to do to the Powers of Europe? 'We treated him when in the chair of this House with the respect he merited. He has, I believe, over our present worthy Speaker the advantage in attitude; but did they expect when he was Minister, he was to stand up and call Europe to order? Was he to send Mr. Colman, the Serjeant-at-Arms, to the Baltic, and order the Northern Powers to the bar of the House? Was he to see the Powers of Germany scrambling, like Members, over the benches, and say, "Gentlemen must take their places"? Was he to stand across the Rhine, and say, "Germans to the right, French to the left"?' After which warm vindication, it was natural that Mr. Addington should show his gratitude; and accordingly, in recognition of Sheridan's useful support, Lord St. Vincent, who was then at the Admiralty, offered him for his son 'Tom' the place of Registrar of

the Vice-Admiralty Court at Malta, an office of good emolument during war-time. The acceptance of this post might have proved the salvation of the young man, and opened quite a different career for him. 'His first impulse,' says Mr. Moore, 'when consulted on the proposal was, as I have heard, not unfavourable to his son's acceptance of it. But, on considering the new position which he had himself lately taken in politics, and the inference that might be drawn against the independence of his motives, if he submitted to an obligation which was but too liable to be interpreted as less a return for past services than a *lien* upon him for future ones, he thought it safest for his character to sacrifice the advantage, and, desirable as was the provision for his son, obliged him to decline it.' This view was also taken by Mr. Wilberforce. 'Sheridan fights lustily for Addington. He proposed a sufficiently absurd vote of thanks last night to the volunteers; but you see clearly that the affectionate regard of Government to him knows no bounds in this honey-moon of their union. By the way, Lord St. Vincent lately offered Tom Sheridan a most lucrative place, which Sheridan refused; very wisely, I think.'*

* One of Sheridan's services to Government had been his defence of Lord St. Vincent and the Admiralty; and having 'coached himself up' in naval matters, it is amusing to find that his speeches were now duly seasoned with nautical allusions and metaphors.

But the real character of the transaction is shown by a statement of Mr. George Rose, who was in constant communication with Mr. Pitt, who told him of all the 'arrangements' meditated. 'Provision is to be made for Mr. Sheridan's son as a reward for the father's services; but to avoid wounding the delicate feelings *of both*, there is an intention of giving Sir John Morshead an employment, that the Prince of Wales may appoint Mr. Thomas Sheridan to the situation Sir John now has under him.' All which seems heroic enough and praiseworthy; and from a remonstrance of his wife, it might appear that some such motive of preserving his independence was working in Sheridan's mind: 'It is indeed unfortunate that you have been obliged to refuse these things for him, but surely there could not be two opinions; *yet why will you neglect to observe those attentions that honour does not compel you to refuse? Don't you know that when once the King takes offence, he was never known to forgive?* I suppose it would be impossible to have your motives explained to him, because it would touch his weak side, yet anything is better than his attributing your refusal to contempt and indifference.'* But the father was not to

* Moore, however, does not mention in his 'Life' what he records in his 'Diary,' viz., that Mr. Tierney told him of 'the sequel of Sheridan's magnanimous refusal of the registrarship of Malta for Tom; which was his asking Tierney to get the place for him for somebody else. When Sheridan, upon the

lose by this self-denial where his son was concerned. The office of Receiver of the Duchy of Cornwall —worth, it was said, about £2,000 a year—fell vacant, and this Mr. Addington suggested to the Prince to bestow upon Sheridan. The Prince accordingly offered it to him in a warm, effusive letter, 'as a trifling proof of that sincere friendship which I have always felt and professed for you for a series of years. I wish to God it was better worth your acceptance.' It would have been better worth his acceptance had there been a clear title to the office.

Before, however, accepting, Sheridan wrote joyfully to his friend Addington: 'Convinced as I am of the sincerity of your goodwill towards me, I do not regard it to be an impertinent intrusion to inform you that the Prince has in the most gracious

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awkward business with Lord Yarmouth and the household, called upon Tierney, in the House, to attest his independent conduct in refusing the place for Tom, Tierney, after having stated what he knew of this part of the story, asked ("for," says he, "I was in a devil of a passion") whether he should proceed to the rest of the transaction? "No, thank you," says Sheridan, very coolly; "that will do."' And even in this there was selfishness, for the young man was sadly in want of a place. In a walk with Moore, his widow told him that there was even another place which had been offered to the young man, and which his father had compelled him to decline! Of her father-in-law 'she spoke kindly, and of his good-nature, when no object of his own interfered; owned also that, under the alarm of any pressure or inconvenience from the want of money, he would not hesitate at any means of procuring it.' Such was the testimony of one who knew him thoroughly!—'would not hesitate at any means of procuring it!'

manner, and wholly unsolicited, been pleased to appoint me to the late Lord Elliot's situation in the Duchy of Cornwall. I wish to communicate this to you myself, because I feel a confidence that you will be glad of it. It has been my pride and pleasure to have exerted my humble efforts to serve the Prince, without ever accepting the slightest obligation from him ; but, under the present circumstances, I think it would have been really false pride, and apparently mischievous affectation, to have declined this mark of his Royal Highness's confidence and favour. I will not disguise that, at this peculiar crisis, I do feel greatly gratified at this event : had it been the result of a mean and subservient devotion to the Prince's every wish and object, I could neither have respected the gift, the giver, nor myself ; but when I consider how recently it was my misfortune to find myself compelled by a sense of duty, stronger than my attachment to him, wholly to risk the situation I held in his confidence and favour, I cannot but regard the increased attention with which he has since honoured me as a most gratifying demonstration that he has clearness of judgment, and firmness of spirit, to distinguish his real friends *from the mean and mercenary sycophants who fear and abhor that such friends should be near him.* It is satisfactory to me, also, that this appointment gives me the title and opportunity of seeing the Prince on trying occasions openly and in the face of day, and puts aside

the marks of mystery and concealment. . . .' One of the 'mercenary sycophants' was, of course, Lord Moira.

There was something odd in these apologies; but there seems to have been nothing absolutely compromising in such acceptance of an office not offered by a Minister. The sequel, however, is truly characteristic. No sooner was the announcement made than a member of the Lake family, brother to Lord Lake, then in command in India, produced a formal deed by which the Prince had granted the reversion of the place to that officer! The circumstance had escaped the Prince's recollection. A very awkward controversy followed, which was settled eventually by the death of Lord Lake, when Sheridan received the appointment.

In one letter to Addington, Sheridan had alluded to the loss of his royal patron's favour as a misfortune which had recently befallen him. This seems to have been connected with the application for military command, to which Sheridan was opposed; no doubt because he thought it was displeasing to the Court and to Addington, whom he was busy conciliating to the Prince's interests. To these capricious alternations he was often to be subjected, and it is to his credit that he did not exhibit the general obsequiousness of the favourite. He not only opposed in private, but took the same part in the House of Commons. Whether the breach was

a serious one or not, he was soon restored to favour, for we find Fox writing in disgust to Lord Grey, that 'the Prince and Sheridan were getting drunk *tête-à-tête;* the latter boasts that he has convinced his Royal Highness that all he had done was quite right. It is not the boast—*which may be all false*' —a handsome testimony to his friend!—'but the dining *tête-à-tête* in the present circumstances which makes an impression on me.'

Unhappily now, in addition to his other failings, Sheridan began to indulge, without restraint, in habits of drink, exceeding even the license of the time. We have already quoted allusions to this failing, which was revealed in a personal disfigurement, his face being covered with 'blotches,' and his inflamed nose being a favourite subject for gibing and the caricaturists. When his friends met in council, we learn from the amiable Horner that 'the old Opposition party held a meeting last night to discuss their plans; I learned a few particulars of it. Fox spoke with great moderation. Sheridan was so drunk, that the first time he spoke he was unintelligible; he afterwards became more articulate, and dwelt a good deal upon the danger of throwing the Doctor, by too severe an attack, into the arms of Pitt. This idea I find very prevalent among many of the friends and partisans of the old Opposition. But Fox's observation was more manly, that they were bound to expose those errors and weak-

nesses of which they were convinced, and were not entitled to practise an over-cautious and temporizing forbearance upon a calculation of any contingencies.'

It will be noted how Sheridan's advice, even in his 'cups,' coincided with his supposed adhesion to the 'Doctor's' party; while Fox, as ever, was on the side of principle. It will be seen from this that there was now a coldness, if not estrangement, existing between the two former friends. There is a letter from Fox, dated December 8, 1802, restrained and mistrustful, which shows how distant their interviews had become: 'I mean to be in town for Monday—that is, for the Army. I am *for* a largish fleet, though perhaps not quite so large as they mean. Pray, do not be absent on Monday, and let me have a quarter of an hour's conversation before the business begins. *Remember, I do not wish you to be inconsistent, at any rate.* Pitt's opinion by proxy is ridiculous beyond conception, and I hope you will show it in that light. I am very much against your abusing Bonaparte, because I am sure it is impolitic both for the country and ourselves. But, as you please; *only, for God's sake, Peace.* Yours ever, C. J. Fox.'

'Sheridan,' as Mr. Moore tells us, 'was jealous of Mr. Fox, and showed it in ways that produced at last great coolness between them. He envied him particularly his being Member for Westminster, and in 1802 had nearly persuaded him to retire from

Parliament, in order that he might himself succeed to that honour.' Horner, who was in communication with many persons of influence, learned also that Sheridan at this crisis, in one of his drunken bouts, had given vent to abuse of Fox.*

The lot of the favourite is ever a precarious one. He is exposed to be supplanted by some other whose tenure may be equally short-lived. The Prince seemed to pass from one to the other of his 'minions,' who did their best to favour his humours or whims. Among the latest of these followers was Lord Moira, who was Irish, like so many of his adherents—a rather impetuous, eager, but not very clever nobleman, who fancied that he had special gifts for political management. He had, in truth, but a clumsy touch, and was destined to be as unsuccessful as possible in all his attempts. He had

* The impression made on a high-souled and unblemished nature is often not an unfair test of character. Thus, when Sheridan first met the amiable and promising Horner, the latter allowed his feelings to escape him in a rather curious way. 'I had the pleasure,' Horner says, 'in 1804, of being introduced to Windham and Sheridan. Sheridan I had an opportunity of seeing and hearing more at length, and in an appropriate manner, for he went afterwards with the younger men of the company to a tavern, where we sat till three o'clock in the morning. His serious conversation, about the Defence Bill and some other matters, was very tame; but his satire and pleasantry full of fire and vigour. He seems to me *rather too attentive to strangers*, though his manners are certainly very polished; but this courteous notice of one looks as if it had a purpose, though it may not.'

now gained complete possession of the Prince, by a certain rapturous devotion which put the interests of his patron above everything in the world. Sheridan had the same passionate loyalty; but none of these favourites or ex-agents possessed his skill or craft in intrigue and negotiation. It is almost a bewildering task to follow out the successive devices and intrigues, the threads of which he was now manipulating. It was, in truth, a strange vicissitude to find himself constrained to countenance a scheme for gaining over Mr. Pitt to the Prince's wishes. He naturally thought it bad policy, and opposed to the Prince's real interests, and we shall see what methods he adopted to forward or counteract it.

It was in 1804 that the Prince was persuaded to open these strange negotiations, sending Lord Moira to Pitt; the impulsive nobleman having thus invited him: 'Stretch forth your hand to Pitt,' he cried. 'Have you the magnanimity and good sense to lay aside all feeling of estrangement?'

On the other hand, Sheridan, after his alliance with Addington, could not decently join in the scheme for his expulsion; but now seems to have entered into a new confederacy with men whom his patron disliked—namely, the Grenvilles—with a view to making abortive these advances. To these politicians we find him most assiduously and laboriously recommending himself, and visibly gaining their

favour. Yet a few years later we see him plotting with the same several arts against the same men! These curious intrigues, which have never been formally traced, but of which there are abundant indications, help to exhibit Sheridan in his most characteristic attitude. Here he was, according to the phrase, 'in his element.' The Grenvilles, those 'starched' politicians, were by no means disinclined to accept his aid. One of the family is presently writing gleefully to Lord Grenville that he had just had a letter from Sheridan, assuring him 'that he has great satisfaction in informing me that all the negotiations proposed to or proceeding from Carlton House, closed *that morning*, by the Prince's adopting the only line of conduct which anyone who really regards his interests or his honour could wish to see him adopt; and that this was formally communicated to Mr. Pitt by Lord Moira. Sheridan adds that he will tell me the particulars.'* He had thus succeeded in his scheme, and brought the Prince and Mr. Grenville together on terms of high friendship. Having to settle a letter to be written by the Prince to his father, as to the education and direction of Princess Charlotte, the Prince ordered Lord Spencer, Mr. Windham, Mr. Thomas Grenville, and Lord Grenville to dine with him. 'We did so,' says one of the family, 'and met no one else but

* These curious details are gathered from scattered notices in the various memoirs relating to this period.

Sheridan.' The following year there was to be a great gathering in Stowe in August, to meet the Prince, when Mr. Grenville urgently pressed on Lord Burleigh the propriety of asking Sheridan: 'I have sometimes thought it might be advisable to ask you how *you feel disposed* as to asking Sheridan. He is a man upon whom such an invitation would have great effect, and make great impression; it would likewise be probably very acceptable to the Prince, and upon the whole, I should feel inclined to think the invitation desirable, particularly as the Prince has always had him at his most select dinners with us.' This shows they were not without suspicion of their new ally, and as soon as they were in power they showed him a cold hostility, which he in his turn repaid with a bitterness as hostile.

Another Irishman of extraordinary ability and vehemence of temper was among the favourites of the Prince; but he had not the suppleness and self-restraint of Sheridan. This was Sir Philip Francis, between whom and Sheridan then raged an enmity founded on jealousy and rivalry. It was curious how Sheridan succeeded in exciting the enmity of his countrymen, Francis, Courtenay, and Burke. Francis, 'a man of tumultuous passions'—violent, even malignant emotions—could not 'hang his tongue' to the 'glozings' necessary to hold his place at the Pavilion. There are indeed few more piteous records of disappointment and political failure,

the last portion of his life being consumed in brooding over vain and frustrated hopes, and in bitter railings against royal neglect. Between him and Sheridan there raged now an envenomed fury, which would have extorted a grim smile from the common enemy whom they had once joined in assailing, Warren Hastings. There is a scene at the Pavilion, described by Francis in 1807, which gives a vivid picture of the contending favourites, and the rather strained efforts at 'wit,' or saying good things, which were supposed to make the Prince's circle so brilliant. There does seem something forced and artificial in the exhibition, and a long night devoted to such 'fireworks' must have been dull indeed.

'We were giving names,' he writes, 'in lieu of titles to each other one evening at the Pavilion. The Prince said the "Man of Ross" was greater than Lord Ross; Fox was the man of the people, etc. The Prince did your humble servant the honour of calling him the "Wise Man of the East." S. looked vipers at me, and inquired whether *sage homme* meant *à peu près comme sage femme?* All laughed, and I said that, being so honoured by the Prince, I had no wish to change my title, or (bowing to Mr. S.) I might be celebrated as the man in debt *to* Mr. S.; but as that would be incredible, I would try to acquit myself by giving him the choice of two names, the man who extends England's credit, or the man of the papers. (N.B. that very morning a puff

had appeared which the P. said was *un peu fort*.) H.R.H. and C. laughed till they saw S. was cut to the quick, when the Prince, with a pitying air and tone, said, "Don't mind him, old fellow! His penalty shall be to find a name for *me*, and woe betide him if I'm not content with it!" None had yet ventured on one for *him*, and all called out, "Name, name." I said with strong emphasis, "*The* Man," and paused. "Go on," said S. "I've done," said I. "I'm content," said the Prince, bowing gracefully round. I ought to have prefaced that the conversation began with the Prince complaining of "Pitt's *impudence*" in limiting *his* power of making peers (among the Regency restrictions), when he made so many himself. "I took care he should hear" (added his R.H.) "that I said the great men in France threw titles off because Pitt had made them so cheap and contemptible! I know my father objected to several both for the Garter and the peerage. J. P., he said, who ever thought of J. P. being a Knight of the Garter, or De G. or G. or C. being peers!" One of us, I think it was Curran, said, "If I had not the honour to be *here*, I should say your R.H.'s circle could not be elevated by the peerage; it is the first in Europe, because it is *peerless*." This sally had *un grand succès*, and the Prince said, "What think you of Lord Shakespeare, Marquis Milton, and Duke Dryden?" This led to the conversation I have tried to give you an idea of,

but only spoilt and flattened on paper. True wit only will bear carriage and decanting; this kind of snipsnap requires voice, look, gesture, rapid retort, or expressive pause. You know how the Prince excels in mimic art, and likes to practise what is sure to be applauded; but he would have had higher aims had he not been sacrificed to low jealousy by a narrow-minded father, and led into ignoble triumphs by interested companions. Yet "his delights were dolphin-like; they showed his back above the element they lived in." There was always a hope, and I would have led the most forlorn, *but S. undermined beneath my feet.*'

It will be noted what hatred is evidenced here between the two Irishmen. The success of the night, Curran's 'peerless,' etc., seems poor indeed; and the compliment of '*The* Man' was fulsome enough. Francis declared afterwards that Sheridan never forgave him for his *truism*, and the society in which such a retort could pass for wit must have been coarse. It is sad to think that with all this service and devotion, the unlucky Sheridan was exposed to the fitful caprices and humours of his patron; and during his later days, when he was sunk in difficulties and needed every assistance, we find him neglected, and for the most part out of favour. There can be no doubt that, with his Irish temperament, he fostered a sort of emotional devotion to his master, based on the long and highly

confidential intimacy that existed between them. We should be glad to see those intimate letters of the Prince, which Mr. Moore says he found in such numbers among Sheridan's papers, and which he was not privileged to make use of. This, however, was no evidence of attachment in that rather capricious patron, who was ever a voluminous correspondent, and impulsively gave vent to the feelings of the moment in his letters. Yet, strange to say, Sheridan did not enjoy the unlimited *entrée*, as it might be called, and as so many others did; indeed he states that such visits were of a secret kind, so as not to attract comment. This, however, is quite characteristic, and in accordance with precedent, for the useful instrument is ever treated unceremoniously. A letter quoted by Mr. Moore gives a good idea of his feelings in this rather painful situation.

*Sheridan to the Prince.*

'It is matter of surprise to myself, as well as of deep regret, that I should have incurred the appearance of ungrateful neglect and disrespect towards the person to whom I am most obliged on earth, to whom I feel the most ardent, dutiful, and affectionate attachment, and in whose service I would readily sacrifice my life. Yet so it is, and to nothing but a perverse combination of circumstances, which would form no excuse were I to recapitulate them, can I attribute a conduct so strange on my part; and from

nothing but your Royal Highness's kindness and benignity alone can I expect an indulgent allowance and oblivion of that conduct: nor could I even hope for this were I not conscious of the unabated and unalterable devotion towards your Royal Highness which lives in my heart, and will ever continue to be its pride and boast.

'But I should ill deserve the indulgence I request did I not frankly state what has passed in my mind, which, though it cannot justify, may, in some degree, extenuate what must have appeared so strange to your Royal Highness, previous to your Royal Highness having actually restored me to the office I had resigned.

'I was mortified and hurt in the keenest manner by having repeated to me from an authority which *I then trusted*, some expressions of your Royal Highness respecting me, which it was impossible I could have deserved. Though I was most solemnly pledged never to reveal the source from which the communication came, I for some time intended to unburthen my mind to my sincere friend and your Royal Highness's most attached and excellent servant, MacMahon; but I suddenly discovered, beyond a doubt, that I had been grossly deceived, and that there had not existed the slightest foundation for the tale that had been imposed on me; and I do humbly ask your Royal Highness's pardon for having for a moment credited a fiction suggested by

mischief and malice. Yet, extraordinary as it must seem, I had so long, under this false impression, neglected the course which duty and gratitude required from me, that I felt an unaccountable shyness and reserve in repairing my error, and to this procrastination other unlucky circumstances contributed. One day when I had the honour of meeting your Royal Highness on horseback in Oxford Street, though your manner was as usual gracious and kind to me, you said that I had deserted you privately and *politically*. I had long before that been assured, though falsely I am convinced, that your Royal Highness had promised to make a point that I should neither speak nor vote on Lord Wellesley's business. My view of this topic, and my knowledge of the delicate situation in which your Royal Highness stood in respect to the Catholic question, though weak and inadequate motives I confess, yet encouraged the continuance of that reserve which my original error had commenced. These subjects being passed by—and sure I am your Royal Highness would never deliberately ask me to adopt a course of debasing inconsistency—it was my hope fully and frankly to have explained myself and repaired my fault, when I was informed that a circumstance that happened at Burlington House, and which must have been heinously misrepresented, had greatly offended you; and soon after it was stated to me, by an authority which I have no

objection to disclose, that your Royal Highness had quoted, with marked disapprobation, words supposed to have been spoken by me on the Spanish question, and of which words, as there is a God in heaven, I never uttered one syllable.

'Most justly may your Royal Highness answer to all this, why have I not sooner stated these circumstances, and confided in that uniform friendship and protection which I have so long experienced at your hands? I can only plead a nervous, procrastinating nature, abetted, perhaps, by sensations of, I trust, no false pride, which, however I may blame myself, impel me involuntarily to fly from the risk of even a cold look from the quarter to which I owe so much, and by whom to be esteemed is the glory and consolation of my private and public life.

'One point only remains for me to intrude upon your Royal Highness's consideration, but it is of a nature fit only for personal communication. I therefore conclude, with again entreating your Royal Highness to continue and extend the indulgence which the imperfections in my character have so often received from you; and yet be assured that there never did exist to monarch, prince, or man, a firmer or purer attachment than I feel, and to my death shall feel, to you, my gracious Prince and master.'

This combination of sensitiveness and jealousy puts Sheridan's character in a favourable light, as it

shows with what damaging candour and even independence he could display his feeling and resentment. The Prince was not likely to tolerate 'huffs' of this kind, and confessions, thus intended to propitiate, must have failed in their effect. It was Lord Hutchinson who told Moore that he believed that it was to Sheridan's later careless neglect that he owed his desertion by the Regent. The letter just quoted seems to support the theory.*

It is clear that this occasional loss of favour was in some sense creditable to Sheridan, as he was not so lost to his own personal dignity as to be ready promptly to discard it, according to the fitful humours of his patron.

During this time the erratic Prince was communicating with Fox and Grey, no doubt through Sheridan. The idea now was to have a new Coalition. 'But,' writes Fox, 'Sheridan, I need *not tell you*, *was in a terrible fidget*. My opinion is, notwithstanding all these intrigues, that the Prince will be

* Lord Holland told a story which leaves a painful impression: 'Mentioned to me a curious scene which he had with Sheridan and the Prince while they were in power. S. having told him (while they waited in an ante-chamber) about some public letter which he had corrected or re-written for the Prince, the latter, on their admission to him, told quite a different story, referring to S., who all the while *courteously bowed assent;* and, said Lord H., "I could not, for the soul of me, make out which was the liar."' This is a probable scene enough: even though we admit that Lord Holland was grossly prejudiced owing to Sheridan's treatment of Fox.

steady.' The lame result was the coming of Pitt to office uncontrolled, while the Moiras, Sheridans, etc., were 'left out in the cold.'

This was a sad conclusion to so much labour spent in ingenious intrigues and contrivances. Addington being at last driven from office, and Pitt triumphantly restored, Sheridan's position became certainly an embarrassing one. His dislike of Pitt, however, prompted him to defend the cause of the fallen Minister, though somewhat coldly. The embarrassment was increased when Sheridan afterwards found Addington enjoying a post in the new Ministry. 'Some part of his administration,' he said, in May, 1804, 'I most cordially approved, and his intentions in every instance I respected, because I firmly believed them to be pure and honourable. I know that his acceptance of office was a sacrifice, and his retirement a triumph.' He then assailed Pitt for his unmanly conduct, his 'insidious support' —a happy phrase; above all, on that '*shabby shallow pretext*' of 'moving the previous question.'*

* In the diverting memoir of Lord Sidmouth given us by Dean Pellew, is revealed unconsciously the canon by which that statesman judged the public interest, viz., according as he or his family received or were deprived of employment. '*God knows what will become of this unhappy country*,' Brother Hiley, or one of his connections by marriage, would write to him when they had to quit office. The following is a pleasant illustration of this spirit. He had made his son's tutor a bishop, and this latter, in a tumult of gratitude, added: 'How you rejoiced me about dear

Mr. Addington could not but have felt well disposed towards one who had so recently encountered Pitt on his behalf—a scene which, though often alluded to, has never been fully described. It occurred during a debate in the March of the same year, when the Additional Force Bill was brought forward. Sheridan had made one of his usual attacks on Mr. Pitt, ridiculing his measure as being 'a day after the fair.' This Bill was to be sword and shield for the country, they were told; but it now turned out the sword was only fit to be a soup-ladle, and the shield a fish-plate. He then proceeded to denounce Pitt for supplanting Addington; the dispute gradually became inflamed by the reciprocal hostility of the insinuations. 'We have heard much,' he went on, 'of the inefficiency of Mr. Addington; but what distinct improvement was there since the change? It was hoped that he (Pitt) would have formed a broad-bottomed Ministry. But he went into office alone, *and lest the Government should become too full* of vigour from his sup-

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Harry! Did I not always prophesy what glory would attend that serenity of mind and that soundness of understanding with which God has blessed him? Excuse me for adding one other word: I understand that Colonel Barré, Clerk of the Pells, is in a very precarious state. I hope you will have fortitude to nominate Harry to be his successor.' Colonel Barré, says Dean Pellew, died on the 2nd of July, and 'Mr. Addington *did* nominate his own son to the vacant clerkship of the Pells,' believed to be worth nearly £3,000 a year.

port, *he beckoned back some* of the weakness of the late Ministry. He found his administration too dazzling for the House, and had to call back some of the mist and fog to make it tolerable to the eye.' Here Sheridan reached to invective, and was in his best vein. Alluding to the expression some one had used of 'counting noses' in a Cabinet—'Still,' he said, 'I do not see why the right hon. gentleman should pretend to be exempt from such counting, unless, like the man at Strasburg, alluded to in "Tristram Shandy," he imagines his own nose of much more importance than that of any other man.'

He expended much ridicule on the new Coalition, illustrating it with old stories, such as that of 'Johnny M'Cree and Garrick.' This anecdote he intended as an illustration of Lord Melville's greed for office. He said, 'I remember a story told respecting Mr. Garrick, who was once applied to by an eccentric Scotchman to introduce a production of his on the stage. The Scotchman was such a good-humoured fellow that he was called "honest Johnny M'Cree." Johnny wrote four acts of a tragedy, which he showed to Mr. Garrick, who dissuaded him from finishing it, telling him that his talent did not lie that way; so Johnny abandoned the tragedy, and set about writing a comedy. When this was finished, he showed it to Mr. Garrick, who found it to be still more exceptionable than the tragedy, and, of course, could not be persuaded to bring it forward

on the stage. This surprised poor Johnny, and he remonstrated. "Nay now, David," said Johnny, "did you not tell me that my talents did not lie in tragedy?" "Yes," replied Garrick, "but I did not tell you that they lay in comedy." On which Johnny M'Cree, "*Gin they dinna lie there, where the deil ditha lie, mon?*"' And the speaker went on to apply his anecdote. Lord Melville could 'not possibly suppose that his incapacity for the direction of the War department necessarily qualifies him for the presidency of the Naval. Perhaps, if the noble lord be told that he has no talents for the latter, he may exclaim with honest Johnny M'Cree, "Gin they dinna lie there, where the deil ditha lie, mon?"'

It is easy to see that though the desired laughter followed, this was not argument nor in a very chastened style; and the chastisement he received from Mr. Pitt in his reply, seemed to embody the general feeling of thoughtful reasoners.

Pitt first gave a sober and argumentative vindication of the measure proposed, with a refutation of such arguments as Sheridan had used. Turning next to the imputations on his own treatment of Lord Sidmouth, he first spoke contemptuously of the 'support' offered by Sheridan to that politician, which he said had never been more than 'a few votes and speeches *given probably when not wanted.*' Had he been so forward with his aid since Addington was *out* of office? No.

'The hon. gentleman seldom condescends to favour us with a display of his extraordinary powers of imagination and fancy, but when he does come forward we are prepared for a grand performance. No subject comes amiss to him, however remote from the subject before the House. All that his fancy suggests at the instant, or that he has collected from others; all that he can utter in the ebullition of the moment; all that he has slept on and bottled up, are combined and produced for our entertainment. He presents us with all his commonplace-book can furnish, or anecdote supply. All that he has been treasuring up for days and weeks and months is sure to make its appearance at the great exhibition. But,' he added, 'such topics were improperly brought into the discussion, and he apologized for noticing them.'

This idea of 'an exhibition,' or entertainment, put forward with such studious insolence, rather happily described many of Sheridan's performances. It is not surprising that, stung by such contempt, he should have replied with all the bitterness he was capable of. What followed produced an extraordinary effect, and has been often praised. As soon as Pitt had finished, he hurried to a neighbouring coffee-house, and there, as Lord Brougham heard, wrote his reply. He began in his jocose and rather undignified vein. Mr. Pitt, he supposed, had 'complained of his behaviour because he wished to con-

trast him with his (Pitt's) own *singular gentleness and meekness of manners.*' Then, using the common device of personality, he added : 'At Walmer he was holding another Alexander's feast. Whether they had a Timotheus of their party, report does not say —the jolly god was, however, not absent. There, like Alexander, "they seized a torch with fury to destroy;" and if they did not succeed, *perhaps it was because there was no Thais at Walmer Castle.*'*

'The right honourable gentleman,' he said, 'has thought fit to allude to the support which I gave to Lord Sidmouth, when that noble lord was Chancellor of the Exchequer. He represents it as an insidious and hollow support. I hope it is not my character to give any support of that description. I say I gave my support to the late Administration with the most perfect good faith; and I know that the noble lord has always been ready to acknowledge it. But supposing I had not supported him with firmness and fidelity; what then? I never had professed to do so, either to that Administration or to this House. I supported them because I approved of many of their measures; but principally was I induced to support them because I considered their continuance in office a security against the return to power of the right honourable gentleman opposite

* This referred to a recent scandal, when the pair were said to have drunk too much, and passing through a turnpike had been fired at by the keeper.

me, which ever appeared to me as the greatest national calamity. If, indeed, I had recommended the noble lord to his Majesty; if I had come down to the House and described the noble lord as the fittest man in the country to fill the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer because it was a convenient step to my own safety, in retiring from a situation which I could no longer fill with honour; if, having seduced him into that situation, I had afterwards tapered off from a prominent support, when I saw that the Minister of my own choice was acquiring greater stability and popularity than I wished for; if, when I saw an opening to my own return to power, I had entered into a combination with others, whom I meant also to betray, from the sole lust of power and office, in order to remove him; and if, under the dominion of these base appetites, I had then treated with ridicule and contempt the very man whom I had before held up to the choice of my Sovereign, and the approbation of this House and the public—then, indeed, I should have merited the contempt of all good men, and should have deserved to be told that I was hollow and insincere in my support, and had acted a mean and perfidious part.'

He then proceeded to deal with the main charge. No wonder, as Lord Brougham heard, that those who listened to this invective and noted the looks and gestures of Pitt under this pitiless tempest, said

it seemed certain that there were moments when he meant to bring Sheridan to account for his insolence.*

Of this sort of profitless raillery, which did not touch the merits of the question in hand, a good specimen was exhibited by him some years before on Mr. Dent's motion for a tax upon dogs (which won for him the sobriquet of 'Dog-Dent'). 'He said that he never met with one more extraordinarily worded; and the folly of it extended even to the title; for instead of being designated "A Tax Bill," it was called "A Bill for the Better Protection of the Persons and Property of his Majesty's Subjects against the Evil arising from the Increase of Dogs, by subjecting the keeping or having such Dogs to a Duty." So that instead of supposing, as it had generally been, that dogs were better than watchmen for the protection of property, people might be led to imagine that dogs were guilty of all the burglaries usually committed. In the preamble, also, there was the same species of phraseology; for it begins: "Whereas many dangers, accidents, and

* This scene prompted a caricature of Gilray's, which became highly popular. It appeared within four days, and represented Pitt holding Sheridan as a bottle between his knees, a corkscrew in his hand. In the neck of the bottle are seen the familiar features, while froth and liquor are escaping. It is labelled '*Uncorking old Sherry*.' On another occasion the great Minister condescended to maliciously speak of Sheridan as 'a flashing meteor, whose *blazing face* I cannot look on,' etc.; Sheridan's face at this time warranting the metaphor.

inconveniences," which, to be sure, was a beautiful climax, "had happened to the cattle and other property of his Majesty's subjects." Now he had never before heard of any particular accidents happening to property from hydrophobia, except in the case of cattle. In the "Adventurer," indeed, he remembered a sort of whimsical account of a dog that bit a hog in the streets, the hog bit a farmer, and the farmer bit a cow; but what was most extraordinary, each conveyed his peculiar quality to the other; for the hog barked like a dog, the farmer grunted like a hog, and the cow did her best to talk like the farmer. Something like this disposition, he supposed, must have been in inanimate things also, by the honourable gentleman's looking so carefully after property; for unless an instance had occurred of furniture behaving in a disorderly manner, or a dumb-waiter's barking, in consequence of hydrophobia, he conceived such a phrase could not have been introduced.'

A specimen of the fashion in which he could turn an opponent's allusion or illustration against him, was the following. The phrase, 'Measures, not men,' had been stigmatized as mere cant, for it was the horses and not the harness that drew the coach. 'Well,' said he, 'we find six new horses in this team, and six old. There is one of no use, being of "slow-paced, awkward, lumpish complexion." So the six new nags will not only have to draw the

coach, but also these six heavy cart-horses along with it. I should like to support the present Minister on fair ground; but what is he? a sort of *outside passenger*—or rather a man leading the horses round a corner, while reins, whip, and all, are in the hands of the coachman on the *box!*' (*looking at Mr. Pitt's elevated seat*). He added an amusing illustration: 'When the ex-Minister quitted office, almost all the *subordinate* Ministers kept their places. How was it that the whole family did not move together? Had he only one *covered waggon* to carry *friends and goods?* I remember a fable of Aristophanes', which is translated from Greek into decent English. I mention this for the country gentlemen. It is of a man that sat so long on a seat—about as long, perhaps, as the ex-Minister did on the Treasury Bench—that he grew to it. When Hercules pulled him off, he left all the sitting part of the man behind him. The House can make the allusion.'

The first portion of this burst seems laboured enough, but in the last allusion there was true wit, and the whole passage was no doubt contrived to introduce it. As we have seen, it was filched from a friend.

Soon after their recent reconciliation, Mr. Pitt and Lord Sidmouth fell out, owing to the characteristic reason of provision not being made for some of the brothers or brothers-in-law of the latter. Coming from the King, to whom he had given his resignation,

Lord Sidmouth met Sheridan, to whom he confided the step he had just taken, and in rather pompous style told him he might impart the secret to the Prince. The Prince's answer was characteristic, and must have amused many : 'What does the d——d insignificant puppy mean by troubling me?'

With Mr. Pitt thus hostile, his patron disgusted with his friend Addington, Addington himself out of office, his wife's friends estranged or mistrustful, Sheridan's position was awkward indeed. It will cause a smile to see what his next step was. To 'patch it up,' as it is called, with Fox and his party! 'Sheridan has been here,' Fox wrote with good-humoured contempt to a friend, 'and I judge is very desirous of getting right again. But you will easily believe my dependence on him is not very firm.' This conduct, too, had its effect in other directions. He met with a very significant mortification in the refusal of Oxford to confer a degree on him, though he was present there with other distinguished persons who were so honoured.*

* The undergraduates, with whom he was a favourite, resented this treatment, and handbills were circulated protesting against the slight. The occasion, being the election of Lord Eldon as Chancellor, was, however, not likely to be celebrated by conferring any mark of distinction on Sheridan. A little later he visited Cambridge, where he met with a similar disappointment. Unlike the chief politicians of his time, he had not been educated at a University.

# CHAPTER IV.

## DEATH OF PITT—1806.

BUT now an unexpected and most serious event was to present a new opening for intrigue, and offer a new chance of amelioration in Sheridan's fortunes.*

* There is one transaction mentioned by Mr. Moore as 'too honourable to Sheridan not to be recorded.' It seems that, in 1797, Lord Moira broached a highly Utopian plan of forming an entirely new Ministry, from which both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox were to be excluded, and the head of which was to be Lord Moira himself. Other members of the Cabinet were to be a Sir William Pulteney and Lord Thurlow. Mr. Moore gravely says that 'such a tottering balance of parties could not have been long maintained, and its relapse, after a short interval, into Toryism would have only added to Mr. Pitt's triumph; and, accordingly, Lord Moira, who saw from the beginning *the delicacy and difficulty of the task*, wisely abandoned it.' As is obvious, these foolish conceited dreamers had no means of even attempting this precious scheme. No one would have ridiculed it better than Sheridan, for whom, however, Mr. Moore—grown desperate from his dearth of heroic material—makes this claim of generous self-abnegation. Lord Moira testified to it thus: 'You say that Mr. Sheridan has been traduced as wishing to abandon Mr. Fox, and to promote a new Administration. I had accidentally a conversation with that gentleman at the House of Lords. I remonstrated strongly with him against a principle which I heard Mr. Fox's friends intended to lay down, namely, that they would support a new Ad-

It became known that Mr. Pitt was dying. Office, inaccessible while his great spirit ruled on earth, was at last within the grasp of his opponents. Twenty-three weary years of ineffectual struggle had gone by since their last brief tenure, so it may be conceived how eagerly the new opening was looked for. Once more we see the figure of Sheridan flitting to and fro, or hurrying through his favourite subterranean passages to the Premier or to Addington, almost revelling in his new opportunities. One of the troubles that clouded the later days of the great Minister was the public accusation against the most intimate of his friends—Lord Melville. Sheridan must have seen with satisfaction the fall of his old enemy, which so curiously illustrated the final unprofitableness of the '*Wha wants me?*' doctrine.*

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ministration, but that not any of them would take part in it. I solemnly declare, upon my honour, that I could not shake Mr. Sheridan's conviction of the propriety of that determination. He said that he and Mr. Fox's other friends, as well as Mr. Fox himself, would give the most energetic support to such an Administration as was in contemplation; but that their acceptance of office would appear an acquiescence under the injustice of the interdict supposed to be fixed upon Mr. Fox. But I gained nothing upon Mr. Sheridan, to whose uprightness in that respect I can therefore bear the most decisive testimony.'

* To judge by the evidence given by Mr. Pitt at the trial, he would seem, in such a situation, to have had powers of refining and 'reserve,' that have been carried to the elevation of a fine art by the great Premier of our own day. An analysis was made of his answers to the Committee, and it was found that over a

Sheridan paid a liberal tribute to the deceased statesman—a fine bit of declamation: 'As for me, there were many who flattered that great man more than I, and some who feared him more; but there was no man who had a higher respect for his transcendent talents, his matchless eloquence, and the greatness of his soul; and yet it had often been my fate to oppose his measures. I may have considered that there was somewhat too much of loftiness in his mind, which could not bend to advice, or scarcely bear co-operation. I might have considered that as a statesman his measures were not adequate to the situation of the country in the present times; but I always thought his purpose and his hope was for the greatness and security of the empire.'

The friends of Pitt may have smiled as they heard this mild description of the old attacks. If there was one thing of which he accused Pitt persistently, it was of assailing the Constitution with selfish pur-

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hundred of these were variations of a cloudy indistinctness. All were in one or other of these forms:

'He thinks,' etc.
'He rather thinks.'
'He thinks to that effect.'
'He thinks he understood.'
'He conceives.'
'He believes.'
'He rather believes.'
'He believes he heard.'
'He understood.'
'Not able to recollect at this distance of time.'
'He had a general recollection.'
'Did not know from his own knowledge.'
'Did not know that it occurred to him.'
'Did not occur to his mind.'
'Was not in his contemplation.'

poses. No doubt, like many emotional persons, he believed that the feeling of the moment was conviction. Pitt's state of health had been known to be critical for some months, and Sheridan had been discreetly making preparation for the event of his demise. One of the most active of Liberal politicians during this busy time was Mr. Henry Grey Bennett, the friend of Whitbread, Grey, Tierney, and of all who belonged to that school of honest practical Liberalism. This industrious working member attended the House with unflagging regularity, and for nearly twenty years kept a minute voluminous diary, in which he recorded many interesting facts and anecdotes and traits of character. These present a curious picture of the mode in which the business of the House was conducted, and from it I have drawn many contributions for the present as for former works. These records, in some half-dozen portly volumes, seem to have furnished the enjoyment and business of his life. His employment, however, was abruptly interrupted, and terminated for ever by an unhappy domestic affliction, which utterly crushed his spirit and made active life distasteful to him. There is something truly pathetic in the simple entry with which he closed his labours, and the rest of the volume remaining unfilled—mere blank pages—shows that it was no mere sentimental affectation.

'I left London for Worthing,' he writes, 'to attend the sick-bed of my only boy, and never re-entered

the walls of the House of Commons, as he died on the 10th June, and we buried him at Weston by the side of his little sister, who had died on the 21st of December preceding. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." They are never out of my recollection. I see them as they played before me, and I wait for that hour when those who loved on earth may meet in heaven, when the tears shall be wiped from all faces, and sin and sorrow cease to trouble.' He died in 1836, leaving behind these entertaining MS. records which have never been published.

Of his Majesty's reception of Mr. Fox—an awkward situation for both—he gives this account :

'On the 23rd of January, 1806, died Mr. Pitt, aged 47. The King, therefore, sent to Lord Grenville, who waited on him, on the —— of January, when after some compliments of condolence on the part of the King about Mr. Pitt, he proposed to Lord Grenville to give him a project of a new Administration. Lord Grenville replied, "Then, sir, I shall consult Mr. Fox and his friends." "You will do perfectly right," said the King. The conference did not last above a quarter of an hour. Lord Grenville then consulted with Mr. Fox, and repeatedly pressed him to take the office of First Lord of the Treasury, which Mr. Fox refused, preferring that of Foreign Secretary. On the return of Lord Grenville to the King, Lord G.

mentioned that it would be necessary to place the military government under the control of the Cabinet. This startled his Majesty, who asked if they meant to remove the Duke of York, upon which Lord Grenville replied that it was not their intention; but they could not submit to direct the affairs of the country if all the different departments were not placed under their control. The King then said he would consider of it. Accordingly, when Lord G. again saw the King, his Majesty gave in a paper, in which he *claimed a power* of accepting or refusing any plan proposed by the Cabinet, which he required them all to sign. Lord Grenville then said that they never entertained an idea of taking from his Majesty the exercise of his constitutional powers, and that he would inform his colleagues of the contents of the paper. He accordingly took it without delay to Mr. Fox, etc., who, as may well be supposed, acceded to the proposition. Whether they signed it or not, I know not; but the King remained satisfied, and accepted their plans. Lord Derby told me this story, he having had it from Mr. Fox. It is most curious, as proving the alarm that the King felt of his Ministers, and that he was disposed to surrender at discretion. Mr. Fox, on being introduced into his Cabinet, when alone with the King, made a speech, in which he lamented that he had been always misrepresented, and that his Majesty had not in his dominions one more attached

to his person or the Constitution than himself; that though he had the misfortune to differ from him upon some fundamental points, yet he would yield to no one in zeal and loyalty, and many other things of the same civil nature. The King appeared to be much agitated, and said, "I believe you, Mr. Fox; I know you to be a man of honour. I say, I believe you, and thank you for what you have said." The audience lasted some time, and the King was most gracious. Lord Grenville told Lord Derby that he knew the King had expressed himself much pleased with the treatment he had met with, saying that he had been used very kindly, and that he did not expect it. There can, however, be no doubt that the King was prepared to stand his ground, and the Foxite Administration were compelled to give up the point concerning the Duke of York.'

Sheridan, as we have seen, had been preparing the ground long, though not in view of so sad a catastrophe. 'Your letter,' writes Addington to 'Brother Hiley,' 'found me yesterday with Sheridan, who surprised me at five o'clock. He dined and stayed the night. *He never pleased me so much.* His tour into Scotland furnished a very pleasant topic; and he *showed besides a friendly feeling* which I shall never forget. Politics of course had a share, and *all that passed was satisfactory.* I told him distinctly that I would not *dabble*, and that my line was plain before me. He evidently came with the

knowledge of the P.' But when Mr. Pitt died (which was on January 24, 1806), this 'line' became clearer still. On the day before this sad event, when the great Minister was *in extremis*, Sheridan wrote to his friend Sidmouth that 'he had been commanded to have a confidential communication with him,' and was told that he would presently hear from Mr. Fox and Lord Grenville. But the astute nobleman was not going to join unless the communication was made 'advantageous to the country' and 'honourable' to himself, which was to be contrived by finding posts for 'Brother Hiley,' Vansittart, and himself, with a promise for 'Brother Bragge.' He said that he was obliged to be 'moderate' to Sheridan in these negotiations, who was writing for the Prince; and Lord Holland, explaining to Mr. Moore what an idea Sheridan had of 'his own powers of management, which often made him stand aloof from his party and friends,' adds that it was he 'who was the means of bringing Sidmouth in with us, and of bringing Ellenborough' (then Mr. Law) 'into the Cabinet.' Nor was this the only part he took in this complicated business. He appears to have advised the Prince in every step, and we find him privy to the volunteered assurance given by the Prince to his father, that he should not be harassed by the Catholic question. The Prince, however, did not allow him all the credit which he claimed in the matter.

Long after, the Prince, when he became King, discussed with Mr. Croker the treatment he had received from Mr. Moore in reference to this crisis; and speaking of the letter which he wrote to his father, engaging not to distress him by pressing on the Catholic question, he positively repudiates the statement that it was written for him by Sheridan. 'It is false,' said his Majesty. '*I* wrote it myself. Sheridan indeed suggested alterations of a word or two, and of the turn of one sentence, but these were not in any way substantial; and I have to this hour my rough draft in which you would see these alterations.' Thus was formed the well-known Ministry of 'All the Talents,' which Mr. Moore floridly compares 'to the celebrated Brass of Corinth, more, perhaps, in the variety of the metals brought together, than in the perfection of the compound that resulted from their fusion.'

Mr. Charles Butler, the eminent conveyancer, from his controversial habits, was not inclined to compromise or toleration. He was a keen observer, and some of his sketches of character are pleasant and genial. He took special note of Sheridan, in connection with this absorbing subject of his thoughts and labours, and his testimony on this point becomes of importance. He remarked how cold Sheridan had become when men like Grey and Lord Holland were eager in the cause; said that though Sheridan always voted for the Emancipation, yet when

the question was before the House, it was observed that even in common conversation he expressed himself with much less feeling than might be expected. So when Mr. Perceval was pressing his anti-Catholic system, Sheridan avoided committing himself to any declarations against it. 'But you may be assured,' as Mr. Butler heard he said to an Irish patriot, 'that our hearts are with you.' The other made this rough retort, 'And you may be assured that if the French land, though we shall oppose you, *our* hearts are with you.' It is when we contrast the unflinching, self-sacrificing principle of old Liberals, such as Mr. Whitbread and Mr. Grey, that we see how flaccid was the morality of Sheridan.

But, alas! heterogeneous as was the mixture of the new Ministry, there was to be no place found in it for the one who had helped in the foundry. No Cabinet place was offered to Sheridan. The Grenville element was too powerful; he had taken part against them in the campaign which had restored Pitt to office. He had unluckily cast his lot with Addington, who had brought in plenty of Hileys and Bragges, but these could do nothing for *him*. Thus it is that the clever intriguer falls between many stools.

'Sheridan,' says the amiable Horner, 'is very little consulted at present; and, it is said, will not have a seat in the Cabinet. This is a distressing

necessity. His habits of daily intoxication are probably considered as unfitting him for trust. The little that has been confided to him he has been running about to tell; and since Monday, he has been visiting Sidmouth. At a dinner at Lord Cowper's on Sunday last, where the Prince was, he got drunk as usual, and began to speak slightingly of Fox. From what grudge this behaviour proceeds I have not learned. The whole fact is one to investigate with candour, and with a full remembrance of Sheridan's great services, in the worst times, to the principles of liberty.'

There is a yet more mortifying account of this exclusion, and one which rests on good authority: Bishop O'Beirne said 'the Duke of Bedford, on his mentioning the matter, authorized him to declare that he could not have said that he would not sit in the Cabinet with Sheridan, because there was never any wish or intention expressed of bringing Sheridan into it.' But Horner wrote to Jeffrey, that Fox was ready to consent to Sheridan being a Cabinet Minister in 1806, but that the Duke of Bedford opposed him; and it is in the same place affirmed that Sheridan's 'blabbing' propensities disqualified him. This is quite consistent, as the good-nature of Fox might have suggested such a thing; and his proposal of the patent place would have been intended to console Sheridan for the disappointment.

So indignant were his wife and personal friends at this slight put on him, that they begged of him to refuse the office that he accepted, viz., Treasurer of the Navy, with the rank of Privy Councillor. He contrived to secure another post, for his son Tom, that of 'Muster-master-General in Ireland.' It was mortifying thus to descend from high political aspiration to be a mere placeman, though financial relief must have been welcome enough in his embarrassed state.

The new Treasurer of the Navy had now apartments in Somerset House. His residence here was celebrated in his own characteristic fashion by giving a splendid fête, to which the Ministers and a long list of nobility were invited, and which it was understood the Prince of Wales would honour with his presence: a ball and supper followed the dinner. Morelli, Rovedino, and the Opera company appeared in masks; the music in 'Macbeth' was performed; in short, nothing could surpass the gaiety and splendour of the entertainment. Kelly, who assisted him in this, records an incident truly significant of the mercurial host: 'I happened,' he says, 'to call at Somerset House about half-past five; and there I found the brilliant, highly gifted Sheridan in an agony of despair. What was the cause? He had just discovered that there was not a bit of cheese in the house—not even a paring. What was to be done? Sunday, all the shops shut—without cheese his dinner would be incomplete. I told him I

thought some of the Italians would be prevailed upon to open their doors and supply him; and off we went together in a hackney-coach, cheese-hunting, at six o'clock on a Sunday afternoon—the dinner-hour being seven.' After trying innumerable shops, they discovered one in Jermyn Street, whose owner agreed to supply some, and they returned in triumph, having barely time to dress for dinner. At this brilliant festival, which was described in all the newspapers, it is a fact that the furniture had to be brought from the theatre! The tradesmen, it seems, would not allow Sheridan to hire any, as they were afraid that an execution might be put in, and their goods seized. Kelly adds that a friendly execution was contrived; Drury Lane supernumeraries and bailiffs in livery were among the attendants. These things seem incredible.*

Nothing is more remarkable than the tide of perverse ill-luck which seemed to pursue the Liberals at this time. Half a dozen times, during a period of some thirty years, they had seemed on the eve of securing office—a brilliant opening being presented—when some strange combination of events snatched the cup from their very lips. Fox soon followed his great rival to the grave, thus making the exceptional precedent of two great Ministers dying within a few months of each other. As we have

* It is not surprising to find Sheridan publicly declaring that he was £1,200 the poorer by his office!

seen, Fox had long ceased to regard Sheridan with respect; to his straightforward, honourable character anything like want of candour was abhorrent. The first distrust was caused by Sheridan's going down to take the Prince's part in the Chifney Newmarket scandal, and by his share in Mrs. Fitzherbert's repudiation. Yet he knew well the situation of Sheridan, his profuse habits and difficulties; and one of his last acts was a truly kind and thoughtful one. Feeling how precarious was their tenure of office, and how vital to Sheridan it was to have something permanent to rely on, with thoughtful good-nature he tried to secure him a fixed provision—by one of those questionable arrangements which were common enough at the time. This incident has not been noticed; but was told by Sheridan himself to the House of Commons in an indiscreet *épanchement de cœur*.

He had rather wantonly accused a Member of 'being a place-hunter,' and this gentleman coarsely retorted by saying that 'he would never have dreamed of applying to Sheridan to get him an appointment, for two reasons: firstly, because he knew Sheridan was too much engaged in providing for *himself and his family;* and, secondly, if he *had* asked him, he was pretty sure that, though he might promise, he would be apt to forget it.' On which rude attack, Sheridan explained how he was situated, and how disinterested he had really been. His

lamented friend Fox had thought that, after a service of twenty-seven years in Parliament, a provision should be made for him, and wished to secure the Duchy for him for life. But on consulting with his colleagues he found that they had determined not to grant for life any place held during pleasure. On being informed of this, he entreated Fox not to press the matter; thus he remained without a provision for life, and this office was reserved for the new Ministry.

Sheridan was always anxious to represent himself as the affectionate intimate of the late statesman, though the latter, it is evident, held him in a sort of good-natured contempt. Some curious particulars illustrative of this feeling were communicated to Mr. Moore, which he did not think fit to use in the 'Life.' It is allowable, of course, to soften many a harsh detail in such a case, and to offer palliation; to hint rather than to state. But it would seem that from the outset the biographer had taken the view that all Sheridan's failings were but light follies of the head rather than of the heart. It will be almost amusing to contrast his manipulation of this incident with the original facts furnished to him: 'Though it is not true, as has been asserted, that Mr. Fox refused to see Sheridan in his last illness, it is but too certain that those *appearances of alienation or reserve*, which had been for some time past observable in the former, continued *to throw a restraint* over

their intercourse with each other to the last. It is a proof, however, of the *absence of any serious grounds for this distrust*, that Sheridan was the person selected by the relatives of Mr. Fox to preside over and direct the arrangements of the funeral, and that he put the last, solemn seal to their long intimacy, by following his friend, as mourner, to the grave.'

Now the foundation for this statement was a certain scene, which Moore records in his 'Diary,' but to which he makes no allusion in the 'Life.' 'Rogers, Lord St. John, Lord Lauderdale, and some others,' he was told, 'were in Mr. Fox's room in Stable Yard a short time before his death, when Sheridan called. "I *must* see him, I suppose," said Fox, and when S. came in, put out his hand to him. S. has told Rogers that, when Fox called him over and shook him by the hand, he said in a low voice, "My dear Sheridan, I love you; you are indeed my friend; as for those others, I merely," etc. This was an excellent invention of Sheridan, *who knew no one would contradict him.*' In another passage he records what Lord Holland told him on good authority, that Sheridan was jealous of Mr. Fox, 'and showed it in ways that produced, at last, great coolness between them.' It may be said, however, that Lord Holland and other Whigs were prejudiced against Sheridan.

Finally, the bitter Francis, who hated Sheridan, thus speaks of their relations: 'To Sheridan alone

he now and then replied with bitterness, as if he were talking to a Jew or a swindler. Within my own knowledge, the only persons whom Fox could not positively endure were Horne Tooke and Sheridan, with antipathy rather than enmity to George Tierney. The former he seemed to detest, and avowed it. Of Sheridan he said little, but that little was enough. From Charles Grey I have it that Sheridan to him was an object of loathing and abhorrence, and had been so for many years before his death.' And again: 'I once happened to take notice of Sheridan's intriguing with Addington, and of his conduct to the Prince of Wales. Mr. Fox, when he heard of it at St. Anne's, applauded me *con amore*, and much more than the thing deserved, *in odium tertii*.' Yet, if these were his feelings, Fox did not allow them to influence his conduct. Indeed, every fresh memoir that sees the light in these latter times seems to bring its contribution towards establishing the amiable character, loyalty, and principle of Mr. Fox. There is something specially touching in this generous treatment of Sheridan, even after the latter had lost his good opinion; nor should Sheridan have ever forgotten that in the secret interview between Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt, when a coalition was proposed, the latter refused further negotiation because Sheridan was to be excluded. Sheridan, it is clear, was himself accountable for any change in the feelings of his friend.

But a transaction, to which allusion has been made before, illustrates better than any other instance that untrustworthiness or want of loyalty which caused the desertion of his friends. This was the trial of O'Connor at Maidstone, when Sheridan was called on to give evidence.

There can be little doubt, Lord Campbell tells us, that, but for Sheridan, there would have been an acquittal. On cross-examination he was asked whether he believed from their behaviour that the defendants meant to favour O'Connor's escape. 'He made the strange answer that he believed they wished him to escape, though he saw nothing in their behaviour to justify his saying so.' A gratuitous declaration which he was not asked to make, but which affected the jury, who, after the manner of country juries, accepted the declaration, and forgot the qualification. The explanation of this conduct, according to Lord Holland, was his vanity, and wish to make a display in the witness-box. In his cups he was said to have boasted 'that he had got off his friend Dennis O'Brien, and that his chief object had been to save him. Lord Thanet, who was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment—by strict law one of his arms should have been cut off—was naturally indignant at Sheridan's behaviour, and used to relate at Brooks' how he had asked his attorney why he had not examined Sheridan earlier in the case. The attorney replied, 'that he had

kept him for the last, when he should know what was necessary to be said.'

But Fox had special experience of Sheridan's monkey-like disposition to mischief. At the time of the secession of the party from the House of Commons, directed by Fox and his friends, and which gave annoyance to the Ministry, Sheridan disapproved of the proceeding, and helped, with Tierney, to 'spoil the effect' by attending himself. No doubt there were many who also thought it injudicious, but in such party moves the wise sacrifice their convictions, as nothing is more vexatious than such a '*coup manqué*.' Sheridan's conduct gave much annoyance to his friends. Lord Holland states that he showed his capriciousness in loudly condemning Tierney for attending the House, and 'spreading a distrust of his motives.' This 'mischievousness' naturally accounts for the feeling of dislike and positive hatred with which he soon was regarded by his party, and must be recollected when the time comes for considering whether he was treated by them with undeserved neglect.

Between him and his countryman, Tierney, this jealousy was exhibited on many occasions. An amusing instance occurred during the time of the approaches made to Addington on the part of the Prince, when Sheridan was enraged at discovering that Tierney had also been employed in the negotiation. Such a discovery—that the credit was to be

shared by another—would prompt him even to counterplot. He could not be surprised that the friends who found they had suffered from these tricks and devices were not slow, when opportunity was found, to 'pay him off;' or, at least, to let him 'stew in his own juice' without offering him any aid. In his last and most embarrassing situation, when he stood in the utmost humiliation before the House, convicted of double-dealing, it was Tierney who made the exposure.

Sheridan was, at once, to feel the loss of one who was perhaps his last protector. We have seen how diligently he had laboured to cement the new alliance of the Grenville family with the Prince; yet almost at once we find this unfortunate politician being dealt with in a haughty and rather unhandsome spirit by them. It is true they were now complaining bitterly of the Prince's treatment, who was forcing men on them for offices—acts no doubt prompted by Sheridan; and it will be seen how they eventually came to detest and despise him—a feeling that was heartily reciprocated. For Fox's vacant seat, their support was pledged to a member of the Northumberland family. This treatment, which Sheridan felt bitterly, must have shown him how little he was regarded as a factor in politics, and that it was felt he might safely be neglected; yet he maintained that they had assured him that 'they would decide on nothing till they had heard his views.'

Naturally he was deeply 'surprised and hurt' at the way he had been treated—'entirely passed by,' as he called it. 'I do not mean to say that my offering myself was immediately to entitle me to the support of Government; but I do mean to say that my pretensions were entitled to consideration before that support was offered to another without the slightest notice taken of me.' This treatment was the more extraordinary, as Sheridan was one of their own officials, enjoying a high office.

In a remonstrance to Lord Grenville, he speaks of being 'left under an unmerited degree of discredit and disgrace.' Lord Grenville having excused himself on the ground that he had heard that Sheridan had resolved not to offer himself, he replied: 'Allow me to suppose that I had myself seen your lordship, and that you had explicitly promised me the support of Government, and had afterwards sent for me and informed me that it was at all an object to you that I should give way to Lord Percy, I assure you, with the utmost sincerity, that I should cheerfully have withdrawn myself, and applied every interest I possessed as your lordship should have directed.' It might seem strange that he should not have gone directly to the Minister and told him of his intention. One would be inclined to fancy that Sheridan may have suspected that if he did so, he would be told that they had already promised the seat; whereas if he presented himself to the electors,

Government might be inclined to give way to him. It, however, furnished him with an opportunity for a speech to the electors, which as a grand disinterested profession of faith might have been made by the purest of patriots, by Washington himself. He declared that if he had been indelicate enough to come forward during Fox's illness, he might have been secure. 'And now, reviewing my past political life, were the option possible that I should retread the path, I solemnly and deliberately declare that I would prefer to pursue the same course; to bear up under the same pressure; to abide by the same principles; and to remain by his side an exile from power, distinction and emolument, rather than be at this moment a splendid example of successful servility or prosperous apostasy, though clothed with power, honour, titles, gorged with sinecures, and lord of hoards obtained from the plunder of the people.'

He then seemed to utter something to the address of Ministers: 'Illiberal warnings have been held out, most unauthoritatively I know, that by persevering in the present contest I may risk my official situation; and if I retire, I am aware that minds, as coarse and illiberal, may assign the dread of that as my motive. To such insinuations I shall scorn to make any other reply than a reference to the whole of my past political career. I consider it as no boast to say, that anyone who has struggled through such a portion of life as I have, without obtaining an

office, is not likely to abandon his principles to retain one when acquired. If riches do not give independence, the next best thing to being very rich is to have been used to be very poor. But independence is not allied to wealth, to birth, to rank, to power, to titles, or to honour. Independence is in the mind of a man, or it is nowhere. On this ground were I to decline the contest, I should scorn the imputation that should bring the purity of my purpose into doubt. No Minister can expect to find in me a servile vassal. No Minister can expect from me the abandonment of any principle I have avowed, or any pledge I have given. I know not that I have hitherto shrunk in place from opinions I have maintained while in opposition. Did there exist a Minister of a different cast from any I know in being, were he to attempt to exact from me a different conduct, my office should be at his service to-morrow. Such a Ministry might strip me of my situation, in some respects of considerable emolument, but he could not strip me of the proud conviction that I was right; he could not strip me of my own self-esteem; he could not strip me, I think, of some portion of the confidence and good opinion of the people. But I am noticing the calumnious threat I allude to more than it deserves. There can be no peril, I venture to assert, under the present Government, in the free exercise of discretion, such as belongs to the present question.'

It is hard to read this burst without a smile. The grand exposition of independence of mind, combined with poverty, being superior to wealth and office, was amusing, as coming from the lips of one of the most *dependent* of men, one who had been all his life 'dependent' on borrowings or takings from others, who at that moment was in possession of no less than two well-paid offices, and who had recently failed to obtain a third. No doubt he fancied that things were really as he had stated. But this is exactly in the spirit of the piteous lament he later made to Lord Byron, the vinous tears in his eyes. It was easy, he said, for such and such a wealthy man to follow a consistent course and live an upright life—men who from their wealth and position were above temptation—how different with him who 'never was in possession *of a shilling that he could call his own!*' The truth was, he had had a great deal of money that *was* his own, and few adventurers came better equipped for opening the world's oyster. His wife's fortune, together with the receipts of four successful plays, some thousands more, large sums from the theatre and his plays, the profits of two places, all supplemented by the use of other people's money, the same as his own, because unrepaid—surely these were wonderful advantages for one who had not a shilling he could call his own!

Six times had he been elected by Stafford, and

he had declared that 'his gratitude and devotion to his friends bound him to seek no other seat.' In a few weeks, however, Parliament being dissolved, we find him abandoning his good friends at Stafford to seek election at Westminster! In this contest, when he was opposed by Mr. Paull, a returned East Indian, there were many indications of his adroit shiftiness, and some odd stories were circulated of his doings. He was accused of secretly intriguing against Lord A. Percy, while affecting to support him, so much so that Lord A. Percy declined to stand with him. Mr. Dennis O'Brien was now his agent, yet at the previous election had supported Lord A. Percy. He declared that there were people who would rather elect the Duke's porter, than support a man of honour and talent like Sheridan. This had an awkward sound, and Mr. Whitbread advised him to give some explanation; but Sheridan turned the matter into buffoonery, saying, 'they would prefer Whitbread's *porter*.'

Lord Holland declares that during this contest Sheridan was actually 'execrated by the people,' and that he himself went to the Ministry and obtained for him, with great exertion, some reluctant assistance, owing to which he was returned. Notwithstanding this he remained under the delusion that he was the man of the people, mistaking the shouts of the mob for popularity. 'He thought in his vanity,' adds Lord Holland, 'he might defy the Court and the

aristocracy; and such was his confidence in his own popularity and management, that he not only neglected, but derided and insulted the clubs and committees who managed such elections.' His old buoyancy and irrepressible spirit carried him through all obstacles. Paull, his opponent, who was the son of a tailor, envious of the brilliant uniform and more brilliant decorations of Sir S. Hood, another of the candidates, observed, with some spleen, 'that if he had chosen he might have appeared before the electors with such a coat himself.' 'Yes, and you might have made it too,' retorted Sheridan. He also announced his happiness at Hood's commanding place on the poll, and said 'that he rejoiced more particularly because, for his own part, he doubted whether he should be most chagrined at defeat, or at being Paull's colleague.' It has been well remarked what a ludicrous thing it was to find Whig patriots and friends of the people reproaching a brother patriot with being a tradesman.

Faithful to this spirit, which was really O'Connell's style on such occasions, a tailor's goose carried on a pole met the eyes of the rival candidate, and parties of Irishmen roared obstreperously, 'Sheridan for ever!' On the other hand, his 'bottle-nose' and red cheeks were heartily ridiculed. Some of his creditors were paid to come and bully him on the hustings, while he was openly charged with eating peas at two guineas and a half a quart. His son

Tom appeared on the hustings, and gave him effective support, so much so that his father absurdly declared to the crowd that he would ask 'no higher fame than to be pointed out as the father of such a son.' Sheridan himself did vigorous service, and once declared that he was only restrained from personal chastisement of Mr. Paull by considering that he should raise him in the estimation of society by kicking him out of it. Indeed, such was the violence of the contest that Sheridan ran some serious risk. He was struck by an angry butcher on the back with a marrow-bone, and a doctor had to certify that he could not appear on the hustings. This proved a costly victory, and his expenses were defrayed by a subscription, the Duke of Queensberry giving £1,000. By way of soothing the Stafford electors, who were angry at his throwing them over, he sent down his son Tom to seek their suffrages, who was defeated, polling only 165 votes. The actors of Sheridan's theatre celebrated his victory by giving him a dinner at the Piazza Coffee House, where the versatile Hook first exhibited for him his wonderful powers of improvisation.* Mr. Sheridan was astounded at this exhibition, but it was noted that

* This pleasant creature had tried to further Sheridan's interest in his own grotesque way. Being behind the scenes, during the performance of some pantomime, he had seized the horn or trumpet, by whose aid the roaring of some stage monster was imitated, and to the astonishment of the audience had bellowed forth '*Sher-i-dan for e-ver!*'

though he made a speech, it was heavy and uninteresting.

With this election was connected an awkward incident, which added to the crop of troubles now fast gathering about him. Mr. Paull, one of the candidates, addressed a petition to the House, accusing Sheridan of having tampered with witnesses, with a view to keep back their evidence; and Lord Folkestone seemed to take almost spiteful pleasure in pressing the matter against Sheridan. It proved to be something like a conspiracy, got up by one Drake, who, it seems, had married an illegitimate daughter of Sheridan, and who was not a respectable character. This man swore before the House of Commons that Sheridan had promised him a place and money if he kept out of the way. But though the whole broke down, and the charge found only one supporter, Lord Folkestone, who was said to have uttered a faint 'No,' some matters came out which showed that Sheridan had been highly indiscreet. A letter was produced, written in his capacity as Treasurer, addressed to all commanders of vessels to whom it might be shown, recommending one Harris, a Jew, to their custom, as 'an honest tradesman, who can supply and fit the men with any article they might be in want of, the best of their kind.' Much exertion was made to keep this letter undiscovered, but it was eventually brought out. The scenes, too, at which Drake and

Sheridan and their attorneys took part, show that all were on the most intimate footing when helping on the election. It did indeed seem at this time that everything was going wrong with him, while he must have forecasted that more serious troubles were gathering, which he could scarcely hope to vanquish. This feeling was reflected in his depressed spirit, his want of confidence in himself and his efforts, and in that recourse to the bottle which was accountable for many of his later shortcomings.

Mathews had lately joined the company at Drury Lane, and was struck by the 'heavy' character of Sheridan's speech at the dinner given in his honour, and his general dulness. The pleasant actor was to see much of him after this. But even he, ever good-humoured and tolerant, could not report favourably of his general behaviour. 'He was seldom,' says Mrs. Mathews, 'agreeable in the presence of actors. He always entered his own theatre as if stealthily and unwillingly, and his appearance amongst his performers never failed to act like a dark cloud. I perfectly well remember one particular evening, when Miss De Camp, after a somewhat *animated* colloquy with him, closed it by telling him, "that the performers were all very happy before he entered the room, and that he never came but to make everybody uncomfortable."' Mathews noticed that Sheridan drank, even when ladies were present,

inordinately at table.* 'I recollect once sitting next to him at a dinner-party, when he asked me whether I "had ever before been in company with Mathews; if not, that I had a great treat to come!" Even in the case of men of his own age, he could not compete with superior animal spirits. Colman perfectly broke him down by the force of his vivacity. Sheridan had no chance with him in repartee, and he always gave up to his little merry companion, after the first attempt, in which he generally failed. Sometimes the writing of his little despatches was so wretchedly bad as to render their meaning unintelligible, and to compel my husband to take the notes to his son, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, for translation. One night an order of Mr. Sheridan's was stopped at the box-door of Drury Lane Theatre, and pronounced a forgery, because the door-keeper *could read it!*'

We have other glimpses of Sheridan 'behind the scenes,' which prove that, in spite of this brilliant encouragement, his mode of direction was of the most careless kind. The humorous 'Irish' Johnstone told Mr. Moore that 'Sheridan one night came to Drury Lane tipsy, when the "School for Scandal"

* 'Mathews,' says Sir W. Scott, 'assures me that Sheridan was generally very dull in society, and sat sullen and silent, swallowing glass after glass, rather a hindrance than a help; but there was a time when he broke out with a resumption of what had been going on, done with great force, and generally attacking some persons in the company, and some opinions which they had expressed.'

was acting, went into the green-room when it was over, and asked what play it was. Wroughton gravely told him. "And who was it," he said, "that acted the old fellow—Sir Peter what-d'ye-call'm?" "Mathews, sir." "Never let him play it again; he looks like an old pastry-cook." "I am sorry, Mr. S." (says Wroughton), "to say that we seldom see you here, and you never come but to find fault." Wroughton was always sturdy with him.' And Mrs. Mathews adds the sequel: 'Mr. Sheridan was dissatisfied with Mr. Mathews's performance when the night came (as, it was said in the green-room, he had been with every previous representative of it, including King), and, after the second night, Mr. Wroughton resumed the part, taken from him by Mr. Sheridan's desire, and given to Mr. Mathews. Mr. Sheridan grumbled with Mr. Wroughton's performance after the play was over, as much as he had done at that of Mr. Mathews.'

He was scarcely settled in his hard-won seat, when, on the dismissal of the Grey and Grenville Cabinet, he had to face a new contest. He set to work afresh with unabated energy. There were five candidates—Burdett, Paull, Lord Cochrane, Elliott, and himself. Again he seems to have displayed a sort of reckless buffoonery, not likely to recommend him, in his addresses to the mob. This was a hopeless contest, but he was lucky enough to secure a seat at Ilchester. There was a touch of

farce in the treatment his son met with at Stafford, where the burgesses, on hearing of his approach, went out to meet him, and having taken the horses from the carriage, '*drew it in a direction towards London*, and then wished the candidate a safe journey back to his father, who met him returning at Oxford.'

Connected with the short-lived Administration, and its rather mysterious dissolution, there has been much debating and many speculations. But Mr. Gray Bennett, in his curious unpublished 'Diary,' which in many points rivals the diligent knowledge of Mr. Charles Greville, describes a curious scene, illustrating the King's character in a very remarkable way: 'Lord Erskine, dining with my brother in March, 1810, stated at large the different discussions he had had with the King during his office, particularly a celebrated one with him during the disputes that terminated with the dissolution of the Whig Administration. He detailed, in a language, my brother told me, the most forcible and energetic, all the arguments that could persuade the King to accept the proffered terms of his Ministers, viz., the abandonment of the Catholic Bill; and he stated the risk the King ran in changing a strong for a weak Administration, and in taking the advantage of this difference of opinion to quarrel with his Ministers. To all this the King listened most attentively—(Lord Erskine having great influence with the King, as being of his opinion upon the Catholic question)

—and he desired him to remain in office a week longer, or, at all events, till he heard from him. At the end of the week, he sent for Lord Erskine, and began by replying *seriatim* to all the arguments Lord Erskine had used the week before in a long set speech, which Lord E. said was the finest he ever heard in composition, in arrangement, in dignity of tone and manner, and above all in the nice tact discovered and the accurate knowledge shown of the opinions of different men, of the state of parties, of how far the time was propitious to struggle against his Ministers, of how much he could risk, and the due appreciation of his own popular favour. In short, of all that could form or guide the most unerring judgment. He demanded the most implicit confidence and secrecy from Lord Erskine, whose reply was, "Sir, you speak to a wall. I have no senses left but my ears." Lord Erskine added that he should never disclose what the King told him. He spoke most contemptuously of his heart, the falsehood, treachery, and manœuvring of his character; but gave the highest praise to his understanding as being one of the first order, concluding the climax with—"in short, he would pick the very teeth out of your head." Sheridan, who dined there, said he never heard Erskine so brilliant, and my brother declares that his conversation was the most beautiful specimen of eloquence he had ever met with.* Lord

* It was curious that this clever being, who enjoyed a far higher reputation than Sheridan did, should, after so brilliant a

Grey told me that during Mr. Fox's illness, the King sent repeatedly to inquire after his health. After his death, he never mentioned his name or expressed any regret for his loss.'

The abrupt dismissal of the Cabinet at least furnished him with a characteristic jest, which has been often quoted. He had often heard, he said, of people running their heads against a wall, but never of people building a wall specially to run their heads against.* This pleasant view is characteristic; but

career, have sunk, like Sheridan, into a sort of discredit or decay. This extraordinary fate reserved for one who had been the intrepid advocate and foremost orator of his day, seems a most perplexing mutation of fortune. We find him at the close, living solitary, circulating epigrams of a poor sort, and finally writing a strange incomprehensible work. Lord Campbell hints darkly at some further oddities. It is amusing to find Sheridan estimating his friend's irregularities by his own, quoting the lines :

'When men like Erskine go astray,
The stars are more in fault than they.'

He once rallied Erskine at a dinner at Mr. Dundas's, where Addington was present, on his not coming forward so much in Parliament. 'You are afraid of Pitt,' he said, 'and that is the flabby side of your character.'

* 'Lady Jersey told my brother Ossulston that she overheard a conversation last night, at Mrs. Boehm's ball, between the Duke of Cambridge and the Dowager Duchess of Rutland. "So, sir," says the Duchess, "I hear we are to be without 'The Talents'; it is all over with them; thank God for it!" "Thank God for it!" says the Duke; "but they keep so close together." "Yes, sir," rejoins the Duchess; "they are so fond of place: it is all to get office." "There can be no doubt of that," says the Duke; "but then they stick so damnably close to each other."—*Grey Bennett MS.*

it may be said that the politician who is burdened with a conscience often thus appears to put barriers in his own way, which less scrupulous politicians call 'building up walls to knock their heads against.' It was certainly vexatious for an embarrassed man to lose what he called an office of 'considerable emolument' after so short an enjoyment. In this mood he naturally fell in with the plans of his royal patron, and on the fall of the Ministry almost became indispensable. He set on foot a new series of intrigues, and wrote for the Prince his new proclamation of faith. Mr. Moore was anxious to have this paper, but he was only allowed to see it.*

* *'The Prince of Wales to Lord Moira.*

'Carlton House, March 30, 1807.

'My dear Friend,

'Although I think it perfectly beneath me to notice with any degree of personal anxiety the unfounded and calumnious reports which, I have reason to believe, have been industriously propagated respecting my motives and purposes in the present important and unfortunate crisis, yet I think it fit to place in your hands, to be used at your discretion, the only notice or refutation of the misrepresentations I allude to, which I conceive it becomes my character and my sense of my own rectitude to give to anyone.

'No one, my dear friend, knows better than yourself how much and how long I have been used to find myself the mark of the most false, contemptible, and, at the same time, the most malignant slanders; nor how little disposition has ever been shown to feel for me, suffering under these attacks, or to afford me the redress which I could not but conceive myself entitled to. The motives upon which I have acted, and my future intentions, I will explain to

Here was the writer revealed indeed! for he announced virtually that the features of the Prince's

you, my friend, in a very few sentences. From the hour of Fox's death—that friend towards whom and in whom my attachment was unbounded—it is known that my earnest wish was to retire from further concern and interference in public affairs; still, however, I was induced (upon what grounds, what arguments, and what application is not now the question, but certainly upon no personal consideration) to continue my endeavours to give every countenance and assistance in my power to the new arrangements, and to persevere to place my trust in an Administration still formed of men whom I respected and esteemed; and this most sincere and warm disposition of my mind and views I communicated in a letter to Lord Howick, written a very short time after the death of my ever-to-be-lamented friend. From that period, I must declare to you with the frankness with which I have ever opened my mind to you, I have conceived myself to have experienced the most marked neglect (to use no stronger term) from the newly constituted Administration; having been, according to my own conception, neither consulted nor considered in any one important instance—a proceeding the more observed by me on account of the contrast it exhibited to the conduct of my dear friend Fox. But of this I desire distinctly to observe that I am not now complaining, because the recollection of it has no influence whatever on my present decision, nor on the course I have thought it incumbent on me to adopt.

'For the same reason I waive entirely all observations, however painful I feel those which at this moment arise in my mind, upon the extraordinary condition in which I have been so long kept, while a victim to the most envenomed attacks of malice and falsehood, during the investigation commanded by his Majesty, respecting the conduct of the Princess of Wales; so far am I from blending any feelings (and I wish they may have been mistaken ones) which may have arisen in my breast during the discussion, with the present question. The only remark I shall make is,

principles or politics were to be 'men' and not 'measures'—that is, any such men as were likely to

that I consider the last minute of the Cabinet on this subject as evincing the justice and decision of men of the highest honour, entertaining a due interest in my private character and public estimation.

'I am, at all events, incapable of allowing personal pique or disappointment, whether such opinions have been entertained through my own misapprehension or otherwise, to interfere with the great duties of my situation.

'On the subject which has occasioned the unfortunate and, I fear, irreconcilable difference between the late Ministers and my father, my opinion was ever known to themselves respecting the agitation of this question; yet neither was my advice asked when I might have been of use in the commencement of the discussion, nor my interposition desired when it might possibly have prevented an ultimate mischief. Ministers quitting office on this ground of dispute with the King, it was not possible for me to appear as the advocate and defender of the ground they had taken. I determined to resume my original purpose, sincerely prepared in my own mind on the death of poor Fox to cease to be a party man (although in alliance with him it had been the pride of my life to avow myself to be so), and to retire from taking any active line whatever, at least for the present, in political affairs.

'To this extent I deemed it my duty to communicate my resolution to the King, accompanied by such expressions of duty and affection to his person as I thought proper to use on the occasion. Whoever by insinuation or assertion has given a different turn, or ascribed a different motive, to the course I have adopted, and to the communication above referred to with his Majesty, has most ignorantly and presumptuously misstated the fact and misrepresented me.

'I have only to add, my dear friend, that you are too well acquainted with my heart, and the steadiness of my attachments where I had once professed a friendship, not to be convinced that

be useful to his interests. He declared that he had had enough of politics. As Lord Holland wrote at the time: 'Sheridan has been behaving strangely, and will, I fear, do much mischief. But considering his connections, talents, and appearance of steadiness to the mob and the public, I fear there is too much disposition to set him at defiance, and a greater desire to get rid of him altogether than is either prudent or perhaps right. It must be owned that the manners and tone of our Administration, amidst its many wise and liberal measures, contributed very sensibly to accelerate its fall.' There was much justice in this remark, and the 'starched' Grenvilles, as Lord Holland calls them, showed a heedless indifference, if not contempt, for what he might do.

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I continue to cherish strong sentiments of regard and esteem for many of the late Ministers individually, and which I trust I shall never have any occasion to alter; and still more confident am I that it is not necessary for me to renew to you any declaration of those sentiments of unaltered affection and regard which never have yet been interrupted, and never can cease but with my life.

'I am, my dearest friend,

'Most affectionately yours,

'G. P.

'Earl of Moira,' etc.*

In Mr. Jennings's 'Croker Papers' is given a curious account, dictated by the King, George IV., of this transaction.

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* 'Court and Cabinets of George III.,' 17.

# CHAPTER V.

## 'THE DAY OF DUPES'—1811.

THAT eminent Tory of the old school, Mr. Perceval, had now come into office. Sheridan's attitude, according to ordinary rules of party, might naturally be forecasted. But no. We hear almost at once of advances made, and of prophecies that 'Sheridan and Perceval will soon be hand and glove.' This alliance was determined by the sudden return of the King's illness, and the certain revival of the Regency question; and the Prince was eager to make the Ministers favourable to his claims. Sheridan always looked to the reign of the Prince as the time when he would at last be independent of the slights of his party, and be able to provide for himself. And he seemed warranted in these hopes by the power he had enjoyed during the days of 1789.

In connection with this influence, it may be said that the long intimacy with the Prince or Regent, and the various situations and complications in which that potentate found himself, was confusing enough for a Member of Parliament of patriotic

principles, especially when the Prince made his famous *volte face*, and adopted the services of the Tory Ministry of Mr. Perceval. The question of his debts, his claims to the Regency, etc., all severely strained the consistency of his friends, and at last he was naturally abandoned and deserted by men like Fox, Grey, Grenville, and others. Yet Sheridan contrived to adapt his plastic conscience to all contingencies, and through all his difficulties kept this one aim in view, to hold by the friendship or to court the favour of 'his Prince.' We have seen what a conspicuous and effective share he had in the agitated council during the first illness of the King; but his most successful interference was to be during the second seizure, when Lords Grey and Grenville were about to be called into the councils of the Prince. Here his devotion to the personal convenience of the Prince, whetted by his own dislike to the strict and somewhat pragmatical pair of statesmen, prompted his eager temperament to take part even against the interests of his own side; and it is admitted by all that he must enjoy the credit of having introduced the Tory Government. Never, must it be said, was Sheridan in such 'a superfetation of vitality,' or enjoyed such opportunities of displaying his peculiar skill and importance, as at this crisis. He seemed to hold all the threads of intrigue in his hands. He felt that he was the controlling force of the moment, the Prince's vizier, above the vulgar

trammels of party and of 'ins and outs.' The Regent was about to be installed, and those who held the principles which he himself, as well as his Prince held, had now at last a precious opportunity of coming to power, and of giving to Liberal principles that long-prayed-for chance. But the volatile Sheridan thought but little of these things.

Now would the Prince be able to select Ministers for himself; but the embarrassment for Sheridan was that recourse could only be had to the 'Greys and Grenvilles.' It will be seen that his ingenuity did not fail him. The two noblemen being sent for, came naturally under the fond delusion that they were to be official advisers and representatives of the Prince in all his dealings. But so simple a thing as the composing of a letter was to waken up all the spirit of cabal and intrigue. Lord Grey himself tells the story of the first shipwreck. Writing to Lady Grey on January 12th, he says: 'I told you that Sheridan was acting in his usual spirit of mischief. The Prince had referred it to Lord Grenville and me to draw up an answer to the two Houses, and the answer, though it certainly needed correction, would, I think, have done very well. I read it to the Prince on Thursday evening, saying I was at Holland's, ready to receive his commands if he wished for any alterations. Instead of taking this course, he set to work with Sheridan and Adam after dinner to examine it; and the former, after pulling

it to pieces, paragraph by paragraph, finally persuaded the Prince to reject it, and to substitute one of his own. They came to me with the information of this result at Holland's between eleven and twelve, and desired me to read the answer that had been agreed upon. I did so, saying that I should do nothing more; that as the Prince had rejected the answer which I had framed with Lord Grenville, I could not concur in framing another, and that my opinion of that proposed was, that it was, in its whole tenor and character, utterly objectionable. Sheridan attempted some discussion, which I declined, seeing that he was pursuing it in a way which I thought extremely improper, and feeling that I could not very well command my temper. I therefore, after expressing these opinions, remained very silent, and showed what I hear he has represented, with less departure from the truth than usual, a good deal of haughtiness and ill-humour. I afterwards remonstrated privately with Adam on the impropriety of having the advice which Lord Grenville and I were called upon to give, subjected in this manner to the examination of an inferior council, and stated that if such was to be the practice, I must decline giving any in future. . . . I heard from Lauderdale that Sheridan afterwards resumed the discussion with Lord Holland, who expressed as strong an opinion upon the impropriety of the whole proceeding as possible. Yesterday morning I had a

note from Adam, saying that he had been kept up till half-past three at Carlton House, and enclosing the answer which had been finally agreed upon. We afterwards sent a long written representation on the treatment that we had received, where the matter now rests. *In the course of the transaction Sheridan's lying and baseness have been beyond all description.*

'Lord Lauderdale happened to be present when Sheridan was at his task, and heard Lord Holland remonstrate earnestly, saying that the two lords ought to have been sent for if objection was taken to their work. "Sheridan muttered something about his thinking that the Prince was not yet in a situation to have a responsible adviser, which was flatly contradicted." And indeed there was so much dissatisfaction, that Sheridan on January the 15th addressed a vindication of himself to Lord Holland, which, if we can accept it, shows that the confusion arose from the vacillation of the Prince. On Sunday the 7th, he says he mentioned at Carlton House that the Prince ought to have his answer ready, and was told by Adam or Lord Moira, two of the "intimate counsellors," that the Prince had directed Lord Moira to prepare one. It then occurred to him that he would attempt a sketch of one, which on the Wednesday he read to the Prince. As it was rather artfully composed "of expressions and sentiments which had fallen from the Prince

himself in different conversations," it naturally pleased. The Prince carelessly said that Lord Grenville had also undertaken "a sketch," as had Lord Moira. On his dining at Carlton House on Thursday the paper prepared by the two lords was shown to him. The Prince, however, who had read the noble lord's paper, proceeded to state how strongly he objected to almost every part of it. The draft delivered by Adam he took a copy of himself, as Mr. Adam read it, affixing shortly, but warmly, his comments to each paragraph. Finding his objections to the whole radical and insuperable, and seeing no means myself by which the noble lords could change their draft so as to meet the Prince's ideas, "I ventured to propose, as the only expedient of which the time allowed, that both the papers should be laid aside, and that a very short answer indeed, keeping clear of all topics liable to disagreement, should be immediately sketched out and be submitted that night to the judgment of Lord Grey and Lord Grenville. The lateness of the hour prevented any but very hasty discussion, and Adam and myself proceeded, by his Royal Highness's orders, to your house to relate what had passed to Lord Grey. Before we left Carlton House, it was agreed between Adam and myself that we were not to communicate to the noble lords the marginal comments of the Prince, and we determined to withhold them. But at the meeting with Lord Grey, at your house, he appeared to me,

erroneously perhaps, to decline considering the objections as coming from the Prince, but as originating in my suggestions. Upon this, I certainly called on Adam to produce the Prince's copy, with his notes, in his Royal Highness's own handwriting. Afterwards, finding myself considerably hurt at an expression of Lord Grey's, which could only be pointed at me, and which expressed his opinion that the whole of the paper, which he assumed me to be responsible for, was 'drawn up in an invidious spirit,' I certainly did, with more warmth than was perhaps discreet, comment on the paper proposed to be substituted; and there ended, with no good effect, our interview. Adam and I saw the Prince again that night, when his Royal Highness was graciously pleased to meet our joint and earnest request, by striking out from the draft of the answer, to which he still resolved to adhere, every passage which we conceived to be most liable to objection on the part of Lord Grey and Lord Grenville.

'"On the next morning, Friday—a short time before he was to receive the address—when Adam returned from the noble lords, with their expressed disclaimer of the preferred answer altered as it was, his Royal Highness still persevered to eradicate every remaining word which he thought might yet appear exceptionable to them, and made further alterations, although the fair copy of the paper had been made out.

'"Thus the answer, nearly reduced to the expression of the Prince's own suggestions, and without an opportunity of further meeting the wishes of the noble lords, was delivered by his Royal Highness."'

Most artfully directed was Sheridan's ridicule, and some well-known lines, admirably conceived to disgust the Prince with these advisers, were now circulated:

'In all humility we crave
Our Regent may become our slave;
And being so, we trust that HE
Will thank us for our loyalty.
Then, if he'll help us to pull down
His father's dignity and crown,
We'll make him, in some time to come,
The greatest prince in Christendom.'

The matter, however, was smoothed over, though it was hard to put up with such treatment, which was really significant of worse, in case power were to come to the Prince. Mr. Moore seems to think that this discussion led at once to the retention of the new Ministers. To this it may have contributed, but only indirectly.

'The day for reading this debated answer was now at hand; yet it was not ready.

'In the secret councils an amusing scene was taking place. Mr. Michael Angelo Taylor, a familiar figure in their circle, was sent for at about three o'clock on the morning the address was to be presented. He found the Prince, Sheridan, and Mr.

Adam all in consultation. The Prince showed him a rough draft of the address, asking him to make two fair copies, adding, in his own style: "Those damned fellows will be here in the morning." On Taylor's advice the Prince went to bed, while he himself proceeded with the task set to him. All the time Sheridan and Adam walked up and down, the latter occasionally stooping to whisper the scribe, "The damnedest rascal existing!" referring to his companion, while Sheridan would occasionally mutter, "Damn them all!" Taylor went home, and repaired betimes to Carlton House, where he found the Prince in bed, but all the deputed members waiting below. "Are those damned fellows come?" his Highness asked. "Yes, sir." After a little came the ejaculation: "Damn them all!" Mr. Taylor was then directed to make fresh copies, as further alterations had been made. This amusing scene shows what embarrassment reigned at Carlton House councils.*

* Sheridan's address, as finally settled, ran:

'My Lords and Gentlemen,

'I receive the communication which the two Houses have directed you to make to me, of their joint resolution on the subject of providing "for the exercise of the royal authority during his Majesty's illness," with those sentiments of regard which I must ever entertain for the united desires of the two Houses.

'With the same sentiments I receive the expressed "hopes of the Lords and Commons, that, from my regard for the interests of his Majesty and the nation, I should be ready to undertake the

'After the address was presented at Carlton House, it was noticed that there was an attempt at state, the room being full of gentlemen and attendants, all the Princes present; the Prince of Wales in his chair, flanked on one side by his Chancellors (Mr. Adam and Lord Moira), on the other by Sheridan and the

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weighty and important trust proposed to be devolved on me," under the restrictions and limitations stated in those resolutions.

'Conscious that every feeling of my heart would have prompted me, from dutiful affection to my beloved father and sovereign, to have shown all the reverential delicacy towards him inculcated in those resolutions, I cannot refrain from expressing my regret that I should not have been allowed the opportunity of manifesting to his afflicted and loyal subjects that such would have been my conduct.

'Deeply impressed, however, with the necessity of tranquillizing the public mind, and determined to submit to every personal sacrifice consistent with the regard I owe to the security of my father's crown, and to the equal regard I owe to the welfare of his people, I do not hesitate to accept the office and situation proposed to me, restricted as they are, still retaining every opinion expressed by me upon a former and similar distressing occasion.

'In undertaking the trust proposed to me, I am well aware of the difficulties of the situation in which I shall be placed; but I shall rely with confidence upon the constitutional advice of an enlightened Parliament, and the zealous support of a generous and loyal people. I will use all the means left to me to merit both.

'My Lords and Gentlemen,

'You will communicate this my answer to the two Houses, accompanied by my most fervent wishes and prayers, that the Divine will may extricate us and the nation from the grievous embarrassments of our present condition by the speedy restoration of his Majesty's health.'

Duke of Cumberland—his equerries grouped behind. The Prince assumed a cold ceremonious manner, and as he read marked all the significant portions with "very peculiar emphasis." Turning now to Parliament, we find the answer to the address was considered an indifferent one. It amused the men in office to hear it abused by the distracted Opposition. Lord Erskine said to Mr. Ward that it was indifferent, and Lord Grey, in the House of Lords, asked Lord Liverpool what he thought of it. "Not much in matter or composition," was the answer. "That," said Lord Grey, with an air of satisfaction, "is exactly my opinion." It was easy to see the jealousy caused by the preference shown to Sheridan; and it was reported openly at Brookes's that "they they were all at sixes and sevens."'

All the great offices were now settled for distribution. The Prince insisted that Sheridan was to go to Ireland as Secretary. This extraordinary idea shows the follies of his councils. Lord Grey would not hear of it. He offered to let Sheridan have any place, 'however high,' with large emoluments; but the danger of sending him to Ireland, where he would infallibly enter into relations with all the agitators, he likened to sending a man with a lighted torch into a barrel of gunpowder. Lord Moira was to be Lord Lieutenant.* What irritation

* Some one visiting Lord Moira saw the state liveries which had been sent home finished for his Viceroyalty.

there was in the minds of Lords Grey and Grenville may be conceived from what Mr. Rose states, viz., that Lord Grey had, on the 15th, been 'with the Prince of Wales, and agreed to accept the situation of First Lord of the Treasury, on the express condition that his Royal Highness should engage to consult only *his Ministers*, excluding thereby Lord Moira and *Mr. Sheridan*, even *from that time*, before he *assumed the Regency*.' The same well-informed politician adds that 'Sheridan, who would take nothing out of the Cabinet, *was positively refused admission to it*,' hardly a satisfactory result after so much ingenuity.

The *finale* of this 'day of dupes' is one of the oddest in political history, and the disappointment of the party who were 'coming in' most cruel and grotesque. The Prince, as is well known, suddenly changed his mind, and wrote to Mr. Perceval that he would retain his services. This letter,* like the

* *The Prince of Wales to Mr. Perceval.*

'Carlton House, February 4, 1811.

'The Prince of Wales considers the moment to be arrived which calls for his decision with respect to the persons to be employed by him in the administration of the Executive Government of the country, according to the powers vested in him by the Bill passed by the two Houses of Parliament, and now on the point of receiving the sanction of the Great Seal.

'The Prince feels it incumbent upon him at this precise juncture to communicate to Mr. Perceval his intention not to remove from their situations those whom he finds there as his Majesty's

others, was of Sheridan's composing. It is quite clear that he had helped to contrive the change. He resented the dictatorial character of the two lords, and their prejudices against him shown by their refusal to give him the office he desired, and he foresaw that in this temper he and his principal would derive little advantage from their being in office. Perhaps it was that he saw that the Prince found it less troublesome to go on with Mr. Perceval.

Once during these debates Sheridan took a different course from his party, on what seems an unimportant point, viz., an adjournment. This wilfulness he

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official servants. At the same time the Prince owes it to the truth and sincerity of character which, he trusts, will appear in every action of his life, in whatever situation he may be placed, explicitly to declare that the irresistible impulse of filial duty and affection to his beloved and afflicted father leads him to dread that any act of the Regent might, in the smallest degree, have the effect of interfering with the progress of his sovereign's recovery.

'This consideration alone dictates the decision now communicated to Mr. Perceval.

'Having thus performed an act of indispensable duty, from a just sense of what is due to his own consistency and honour, the Prince has only to add that, among the many blessings to be derived from his Majesty's restoration to health and to the personal exercise of his royal functions, it will not, in the Prince's estimation, be the least, that this most fortunate event will at once rescue him from a situation of unexampled embarrassment, and put an end to a state of affairs ill calculated, he fears, to sustain the interests of the United Kingdom in this awful and perilous crisis, and most difficult to be reconciled to the general principles of the British Constitution.'

suspected would not be distasteful to his patron, who he knew was dissatisfied with the rest of the party, and he addressed to him the following letter. His conveyed insinuation that his course had been inspired by the wishes of the Prince, is very skilful.

*Sheridan to the Prince.*

'SIR,—I felt infinite satisfaction when I was apprised that your Royal Highness had been far from disapproving the line of conduct I had presumed to pursue, on the last question of adjournment in the House of Commons. Indeed, I never had a moment's doubt but that your Royal Highness would give me credit that I was actuated on that, as I shall be on every other occasion through my existence, by no possible motive but the most sincere and unmixed desire to look to your Royal Highness's honour and true interest, as the objects of my political life—directed, as I am sure your efforts will ever be, to the essential interests of the country and the Constitution. To this line of conduct I am prompted by every motive of personal gratitude, and confirmed by every opportunity which peculiar circumstances and long experience have afforded me, of judging your heart and understanding, to the superior excellence of which—beyond all, I believe, that ever stood in your rank and high relation to society—I fear not to advance my humble testimony, because I scruple not to say for myself

that I am no flatterer, and that I never found that to *become* one was the road to your real regard.

'I state thus much because it has been under the influence of these feelings that I have not felt myself warranted (without any previous communication with your Royal Highness) *to follow implicitly the dictates of others, in whom, however they may be my superiors in many qualities,* I can subscribe to no superiority as to devoted attachment and duteous affection to your Royal Highness, or in that practical knowledge of the public mind and character, upon which alone must be built that popular and personal estimation of your Royal Highness, so necessary to your future happiness and glory, and to the prosperity of the nation you are destined to rule over.

'On these grounds, I saw no policy or consistency in unnecessarily giving a general sanction to the examination of the physicians before the Council, and then attempting, on the question of adjournment, to hold that examination as nought. On these grounds, I have ventured to doubt the wisdom or propriety of any endeavour (if any such endeavour has been made) to induce your Royal Highness, during so critical a moment, *to stir an inch from the strong reserved post you had chosen,* or give the slightest public demonstration of any future intended political preference; convinced as I was that the rule of conduct you had prescribed to yourself was precisely that which was gaining you the general

heart, and rendering it impracticable for any quarter to succeed in annexing unworthy conditions to that most difficult situation, which you were probably so soon to be called on to accept.

'I may, sir, have been guilty of error of judgment in both these respects, differing, as I fear I have done, from one whom I am bound so highly to respect; but at the same time, I deem it no presumption to say that, until better instructed, I feel a strong confidence in the justness of my own view of the subject; and simply because of *this*—I am sure that the decisions of that judgment, be they sound or mistaken, have not, at least, been rashly taken up, but were founded on deliberate zeal for your service and glory, unmixed, I will confidently say, with any one selfish object or political purpose of my own.'

The year's probation went by. It is to Sheridan's credit, that with all his devotion to the Regent, we do not find him, as we might expect, taking any part in the proceedings against the Princess of Wales. This, no doubt, was one of the reasons of the occasional displeasure of his patron. It was reported, indeed, that he had once excused himself to the Prince on the ground that 'he could not bring himself to contend against a woman.' Mr. Taylor mentioned in the *Sun* that Sheridan had told him, when he was driven from Parliament in

1812, that he attributed the Regent's withdrawal of his favour to his refusal to support Mr. Perceval.*

The Prince, when he found that the Minister whom he had continued in office refused to find moneys for his debts, soon turned against *him*, which was to be expected; and it is amusing to find that when the year had nearly expired, he was again making fresh offers to the oft-beguiled 'Grey and Grenville.' At the critical moment appeared the celebrated letter to 'my dear brother,' so happily parodied by Moore,† and in which again Sheridan had a share.‡ The delusive offer to the two lords

* A short time previous to the death of that Minister, he was in the habit of frequently calling on Sheridan, apparently in the mere spirit of friendly intercourse. Mr. Perceval, then, in a way of general remark, said in a kind of conversational parenthesis, 'Sheridan, you never give us a vote now.' 'Look at my political life,' said Mr. S.; 'my poverty carries my excuse with it.' On this the Prince withdrew his favour.

† Pleasant and lively as are Moore's long series of satirical verses on the Regent, they cannot be held to be in the best taste. The Prince had ever been kind and even generous to him; had patronized him as a raw youth when he first came to London; and in 1803 he joined his influence to that of Lord Moira to obtain a place for him. It is certainly remarkable that with the fall of his patron, Lord Moira, and on the latter's breach with *his* royal patron, he now 'felt himself free to call a rascal a rascal whenever he met him, and never was he better disposed to make use of this privilege.' He had no hope of promotion, and was in fact 'unmuzzled.'

‡ Speaking to Lord Darnley of the famous letter to the Duke of York, the Prince said that Grey and Grenville had misunderstood it. The other replied, declining at the same time to be his groom

to join with Perceval followed, which was of course declined. Yet to the two parties concerned he had made promises. To Perceval, as he later wrote to Lord Wellington, he had promised to make no change, nor to look to anyone else; and to Lord Grey, as the latter assured Lord Moira, he had given a similar promise. Lord Grey told Mr. Grey Bennett's brother, that 'at an interview with Lords Grey and Grenville, he assured them that though he nominally retained his Ministers, yet he secretly was inclined to them, and that he would give them all the support he could! The two noblemen made him a long speech on the unconstitutional character of the proposal, and declined coming to any such understanding. The Prince stared at them for some time, made no answer, and turned on his heel.'* It is to be suspected that all these tortuous devices were the promptings of his adviser.

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of the stole, 'that every gentleman in England understood it in the same way.' The Prince said, 'Then I don't understand English.' Lord Darnley shrugged his shoulders, and retired.—*Grey Bennett MS.*

* Grey Bennett's MS. Diary, *penes me.*

# CHAPTER VI.

## THE LAST INTRIGUE—1812.

It was surely an extraordinary piece of political fortune that was to offer the Whigs so many chances of office within little more than a year ; but it is rare that the fates of an Opposition are favoured by so sad a catastrophe as the assassination of a Minister. Mr. Perceval was justly esteemed by friends and foes for his honesty and straightforwardness, and though of mediocre gifts, was a safe Minister enough. It may be conceived what a shock was felt through the kingdom when it was learned that this unfortunate Minister had been shot in the lobby of the House. In a party sense, nothing could be more decisive, or make a greater and more instant change ; and the unlucky Tory placemen, who had passed through a long period of anxious fluctuations to find themselves secure of power, were now cast on the world at a second's warning.

On the 11th of May, and little before five o'clock, this dramatic scene occurred in the House. Some witnesses were being examined, when a shot was

heard outside in the lobby, and Mr. Grey Bennett exclaimed to his neighbour, 'Good God! some one has shot himself!' A few moments later a Member burst into the House and said, 'Mr. Perceval is shot.' The confusion that followed may be conceived; but the Speaker, entering on the moment, directed everyone to go to their seats, and maintain order. The next incident was the introduction of the assassin, who was brought to the bar, haggard and staring, and in great agitation. In the same spirit of order, the Speaker named two Members to attend the examination upstairs.

Mr. Jerdan was standing in the lobby as the unfortunate Minister entered, and was saluted by him. 'I saw,' he says, 'a small curling wreath of smoke rise above his head, as if the breath of a cigar; I saw him reel back, and I heard him exclaim, "O God!" or "O my God!" and nothing more or longer (as reported by several witnesses), and even that exclamation was faint; and then making an impulsive rush, as it were, to reach the entrance to the House on the opposite side for safety, I saw him totter forward, not half-way, and drop dead between the four pillars which stood there in the centre of the space, with a slight trace of blood issuing from his lips.' Great confusion, and almost as immediately great alarm, ensued. Loud cries were uttered, and rapidly conflicting orders and remarks made a perfect Babel. Mr. Eastaff, one of

the clerks of the House, suddenly called out, 'That is the murderer!' who had moved slowly to a bench and sat down. Jerdan then seized him by the collar, but met with no resistance. Surrounded by a crowd of Members, his neckerchief was stripped off, his waistcoat unbuttoned, and he was strictly searched. He was recognised by General Gascoigne, who knew him at Liverpool, and asked if his name was not Bellingham. Some one coming out of the adjoining room said to him, '"Mr. Perceval is dead! Villain, how could you destroy so good a man, and make a family of twelve children orphans?" To which he almost mournfully replied, "I am sorry for it." Other observations and questions were addressed to him by by-standers; in answer to which he spoke incoherently, mentioning the wrongs he had suffered from Government, and justifying his revenge on similar grounds to those he used, at length, in his defence at the Old Bailey. Whilst his language was cool, the agonies which shook his frame were actually terrible. His countenance wore the hue of the grave, blue and cadaverous; huge drops of sweat ran down from his forehead, like rain on the window-pane in a heavy storm, and, coursing his pallid cheeks, fell upon his person, where their moisture was distinctly visible; and from the bottom of his chest to his gorge, rose and receded, with almost every breath, a spasmodic action, as if a body, as large or larger than a billiard-ball, were choking

him. The miserable wretch repeatedly struck his chest with the palm of his hand to abate this sensation, but it refused to be repressed. All the doors had by this time been locked and bolted, and all the avenues examined and secured.'

The crime was owing to a sense of grievance or neglect on the part of the Government, which, owing to his long brooding over it, became a monomania. Mr. Grey Bennett was among those who examined Bellingham, with other Members, and described his careful attention, correction of facts, etc. ; but when the death of Mr. Perceval was alluded to as being tranquil and composed, the tears trickled down his face ; and he then entered into some sort of justification of himself, and, beating his breast, he exclaimed, ' If you knew all I have suffered, you would not ask me for the motive ;' and being told that he had better reserve such remarks, he said, ' I am perfectly ready to allow that I am neither fit for this world nor for the next.'

There was a scandalous haste in all that followed. Within a few days he was put on trial, and though he begged for two or three days' delay to fetch witnesses from Liverpool to depose to his state of mind, this was refused ; and he was actually executed within three days. Lord Byron was said to have sat up all the preceding night to see the execution. Bellingham stated at the trial that he had no enmity to Mr. Perceval, but to the Government who

had treated him unjustly. Had he seen Lord G. Gower first, the latter would have been his victim; but he had fortunately come down to the House earlier than usual.*

This catastrophe found Mr. Sheridan down at Stafford arranging for his seat, as a dissolution was thought likely. He was well received, an address signed by eight hundred electors being presented to him, when he made a speech, the point of which was that 'he was a man whose price was not upon the earth to betray or desert their cause, or that of his country.' He was then entertained at the principal inn, and hurried up to London the same night, where he found all in confusion—a confusion which he himself was to 'worse confound.'

The Prince's two friends, Lords Wellesley and Moira, were successively active in arranging a new Ministry. Once more the old comedy of application to Lords Grey and Grenville was repeated, only on this occasion with more good faith, as Lord Wellesley was a man of honour and sincerity. Mr. Moore bewails Sheridan's conduct in this episode, which he pronounces to be '*the only indefensible part of his whole public life!*' 'He was,' he says,

* With this catastrophe there is associated a curious, well-authenticated instance of presentiment. A well-known country gentleman some days before dreamed of the murder, and coming down to breakfast described it minutely to his family, some of whom wrote the account to friends.

'in some degree, no doubt, influenced by personal feelings against the two noble lords, whom his want of fairness on the occasion was so well calculated to thwart and embarrass. But the main motive of the whole proceeding is to be found in his devoted deference to what he knew to be the wishes and feelings of that personage who had become now, more than ever, the mainspring of all his movements—whose spell over him, in this instance, was too strong for even his sense of character.'

This view Moore took from Lord Holland, who gave Sheridan credit for a certain romantic attachment to 'his Prince,' which is indeed shown in the sensitiveness of the letter quoted before. But it would be more reasonable to lay it to the account of his bitter and perhaps reasonable grudge against the men who had used him so 'scurvily.' Personal dislike is an element, too, which is often taken little account of in judging political questions; and even lack of sympathy—a factor that again, though unconsciously, determines the course of action. This feeling Sheridan entertained for the Grenvilles, and he was likely enough to gratify it even at the expense of his own interests. He was prepared for this course, too, by the ostracism he met with from his own party, by whom he was now cordially disliked. They would not trust him with any of their secrets.* During the previous year, the

* He himself had held aloof from them, as at a dinner a short time before Perceval's death, when, Mr. Ward tells us, 'Sheridan

Speaker notes that the 'Opposition were already extremely dissatisfied with Sheridan;' and his behaviour during the crisis that was now impending lowered him utterly and for ever in their estimation.

That there was some trickery, not to say treachery, on Sheridan's part in this transaction, has always been accepted, and was admitted, as we have seen, by Mr. Moore. But on a careful examination of all the facts, it will be seen that Sheridan was not quite so bad as represented. Not much, indeed, could be said for him, save that he acted under a sense of injury, and that no one looked for a high and delicate exercise of political morality from him. We shall now deal with the story of the 'Household Intrigue,' of which a full account has never yet been given.

The story of the attempts made to form a Ministry to succeed that of the ill-fated Mr. Perceval, would take long to trace minutely. It will be recollected that the Regent had conceived his favourite idea of a coalition. The scene at his dinner-table, when his daughter left the room in tears—

'Weep, daughter of a royal line'—

caused a prodigious sensation. It was Sheridan who rose and led the Princess to the door. Mr. Grey Bennett gives this piquant sketch of the scene:

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and Calcraft, friends of the Prince, but not of us, went away. All his other friends, being our friends too, stayed. Tierney told me Sheridan meant to secede altogether, and vote no more, except for the Catholics.'

'On Saturday the 22nd, the Prince gave a great dinner at Carlton House to the Duke and Duchess of York, the Princess Charlotte, Lords Lauderdale and Erskine, Sheridan, and others. After dinner and much wine, the Prince began to abuse the Whigs, saying they all hated him except three, Lord Erskine, Sheridan, and Ponsonby, with many slighting expressions on Lord Grey and Lord Grenville. Lord Lauderdale replied, and said that he approved of all those noble lords had said, done, and written, and that the Prince would have to repent his conduct. The Prince made no answer, and Lord Erskine repeated the sentiment, reducing, however, the effect by flummeries and idle compliments. They all concluded by getting drunk; Lord Erskine so much so, that my brother Ossulston carried him home from the opera. He kept saying all the time, "The Prince hates Lords Grey and Grenville as he hates hell, and he is right. Lord Grenville is the damnedest fellow in the universe!"'

The Regent favoured the illusory idea of a sort of fusion with the Opposition leaders, who, he meant, should be subordinate to the Tory element in the Cabinet. With this view, Lord Wellesley was first entrusted with the duty of forming a Ministry. 'Taylor told me,' says Mr. Grey Bennett, 'that the difficulty was with the Regent to admit Lord Grey into the Cabinet, and when that was got over all was thought settled. In the midst

of all these serious things, the only joke I have heard of was from Sheridan, who said to me the other night, that two trades were lost in this town, viz., cabinet-makers and joiners.'

But all the while he was secretly and insidiously trying his hand at one of these trades, heartily reciprocating their dislike of him. This dislike, as we have seen, was first shown at the election for Westminster, for the seat left vacant by Fox's death, where Sheridan had fully intended to succeed his friend. To his surprise and annoyance, he found that the Government had preferred to adopt another candidate.

On the final attempt at arrangement, 'Lord Grey said that before they went further as to the discussion of offices to be held by different persons, he thought it necessary to ask what was intended to be done in respect to the officers of the Household. Lord Moira said that he had full powers to remove them, as well as any other officers of State, but that he personally should consider such an act as highly injurious to the public service. To this Lord Grey and Lord Grenville replied, they also acted on public grounds alone, and that on these grounds it appeared to them indispensable that the connection of the great offices of the Court with the political administration should be clearly established in its first arrangements. A decided difference of opinion as to this point having been thus expressed on both

sides, the conversation ended here with mutual declarations of regret.

Such was the conclusion of the comedy. The behaviour of the two lords has often been discussed, and on the record, as it were, they would seem to have been grasping. But it must not be forgotten that they were only to form a portion of the Ministry, and that the Prince's agent was to be the head. And they knew enough of what *tracasseries* were certain to follow.

It was announced accordingly that the attempts had failed, and much indignation was expressed by the disappointed Whigs at the selfishness of a Prince who could 'put the destinies of a nation in competition with the trivial question of grooms of the chamber and lords-in-waiting.' At all events, he had decided to keep his Tory advisers in office.

But presently ugly rumours got abroad that some knavery of Sheridan's was at the bottom. He had betrayed the party. It was openly stated that the point on which all had been broken off had actually been conceded, and that Sheridan had craftily interfered, or in some way juggled the matter. It was even asserted that he had concealed this fact from his friends. It was an exciting day in the House of Commons when Lord Yarmouth, himself one of the Household, told the House the true story, that they had all determined to resign when the new Ministers came in, 'to save the Prince from humilia-

tion.' They took every means to show that they would have no connection with the incoming Ministers, and *in particular he communicated this intention to a right honourable gentleman who took an active part in the negotiation;* on which a chorus of 'Hear, hear!' broke out from all sides of the House, showing that it was known who was referred to. Sheridan was thus given up to justice by his own intimate boon companion.

Mr. Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, then rose to declare that all this was quite new to him. 'Who the honourable gentleman was who had so large a share in the negotiation, and whom it was so great a happiness to pass private hours with, he knew not; but he could state positively that neither he nor Lord Grenville had been told of the matter. He believed that the honourable gentleman was in the House, and if he did not speak correctly, he begged of him to contradict him.' But the luckless Sheridan could not be found! Worse, however, was to come. Lord Yarmouth was his intimate and 'co-drinker;' another 'friend' was now to give his testimony by way of clearing him. Mr. Tierney now said, in his defence, that to show how improbable was that story of Lord Yarmouth, *he had repeated it that very day to Sheridan*, who said to him, '*I'll bet five hundred guineas no such thing was ever contemplated.*' This, too, uttered just after Lord Yarmouth had told him of his intention!

It was impossible for Sheridan to rest under this double charge of untruth and deceit. So on June 15 he asked leave to make a statement. It was long remembered what a sad exhibition he made. He spoke of his wish to vindicate his personal honour, and gave notice of a motion for a future day, when he would explain facts, after which 'there would not be a living being, he believed, in the character of a gentleman, who would countenance any reflections on his honour or character.' This called up Lord Yarmouth once more, who declared 'that on the previous day he fancied he had seen Sheridan sitting in his place, or he would not have made the statement. As this was not the case, he would now *re-state* to him what he said.' Amid cries of 'No, no!' 'Go on!' he proceeded to the 're-statement': 'My right honourable friend and myself happened to meet one night in a well-known place, where we were accustomed to spend our evenings. "I hear," he said, "you are all going to resign." I said, "We are." "Let me desire of you," he answered, "as an old friend, not to do so; take my advice and think better of it. We will talk of it, if you please, to-morrow." I then observed, "What you say will have always more weight with me than any man in the kingdom." Accordingly, we appointed an hour next day to talk on the subject; but as the *right honourable* gentleman did not come at his hour, I went out without seeing him.' Here Sheridan interrupted

with an objection that all this was irregular, as he had given a notice of motion, when all would be made plain. On which Lord Yarmouth stopped at once, and said he was sure his friend would explain all satisfactorily.

June 17 was to be a disastrous day for poor Sheridan's reputation. He came forward to give the promised explanation, but it was a difficult task. It was an 'inauspicious omen,' he said, that everybody believed that he had been taken seriously ill; and he felt, he said, taken aback when his friends, 'in a most alarming tone and with lengthened faces,' began to condole with him. 'I *was* lately ill, and am very far from being remarkably well.' But nothing would have kept him from making this vindication of himself. He was accused, by underhand means, of preventing his friends from coming into office. The truth was, 'had my counsels prevailed, not one of the present Ministers would now have been in office.' At which there was laughter. No one credited this bold statement, yet there was some foundation for it. He then proceeded to dwell on the influence he was supposed to have with the Prince. He declared solemnly that if he had taken advantage for a moment of that confidence and intercourse for the purpose of advising him, he 'should have met with the severest reprobation from that illustrious person himself.' 'I will not attempt to disguise that no man living has had

more opportunities of knowing most intimately that illustrious person than myself; but it is only known to him and to the Omnipotent Searcher of hearts, whether I have merited or preserved that confidence by acts of sycophancy. If ever there was a Prince who wished to be surrounded with advisers of sincerity, he was the one. I wish the country, I wish the House knew his heart as well as myself. I have often differed from him as well as from my party, because I loved the welfare of my country better than the approbation of either. If I had lost his confidence for doing my duty, I would have risked it, and he would have lost what I pray God he might soon repair, a man devoted with his heart and soul to himself and not to his station. The income which I derive from the bounty of the Prince is the only thing I have——' Here he broke down, and became much agitated, and then gave an account of how he obtained General Lake's place.

In this sad outburst we find the tone of the broken man and fallen favourite, for it was addressed in a piteous, deprecating strain to the royal personage himself. He was, in truth, now fallen out of favour. He declared solemnly that for two months he had only spoken to the Prince once. At an audience to explain his motives for going to Stafford, he gave him his opinion, and 'I most devoutly wish that that opinion could be *published to the world, that*

*it might shame those who now belie me.'** He went on: 'No man did more indirectly to remove the

* He was here referring to a letter which is given by Mr. Moore: 'It appears that his Royal Highness had signified either his intention or wish to exclude a certain noble Earl' (Lord Grey) 'from the arrangements to be made under that commission. On learning this, Sheridan not only expressed strongly his opinion against such a step, but having, afterwards, reason to fear that the freedom with which he spoke on the subject had been displeasing to the Regent, he addressed a letter to that illustrious person (a copy of which I have in my possession), in which, after praising the "wisdom and magnanimity" displayed by his Royal Highness in confiding to Lord Wellesley the powers that had just been entrusted to him, he repeated his opinion that any "proscription" of the noble Earl in question would be "a proceeding equally derogatory to the estimation of his Royal Highness's personal dignity and the security of his political power; adding that the advice which he took the liberty of giving against such a step did not proceed "from any peculiar partiality to the noble Earl, or to many of those with whom he was allied; but was founded on what he considered to be best for his Royal Highness's honour and interest, and for the general interests of the country."'

The letter (in alluding to the displeasure which he feared he had incurred by venturing this opinion) concludes thus: 'Junius said in a public letter of his, addressed to your royal father, "the fate that made you a King forbad your having a friend." I deny his proposition, as a general maxim—I am confident that your Royal Highness possesses qualities to win and secure to you the attachment and devotion of private friendship, in spite of your being a Sovereign. At least I feel that I am entitled to make this declaration as far as relates to myself—and I do it under the assured conviction that you will never require from me any proof of that attachment and devotion inconsistent with the clear and honourable independence of mind and conduct which constitute my sole value as a public man, and which have hitherto been my best recommendation to your gracious favour, confidence, and protection.'

prejudices which were exhibited, and to conciliate goodwill to the illustrious nobleman (*i.e.*, Lord Grey) than myself;' which seems to betray the secret dislike of the Prince to Lord Grey. He then denied that he had ever been a 'secret negotiator.' 'How did I know, it will be asked, these details about the negotiation? From Lord Wellesley coming to show the written terms, and offering a situation in his arrangements, *when he received a most disinterested denial* of accepting any official situation.' Here, again, is another mystery. Why should he decline to accept an office? He then came to the awkward charge about his behaviour as to the Household. He tried to cloud the matter by attacking the two lords for sacrificing such great questions as the relief of the Catholics, etc., all because they wanted *three white sticks removed* (which extorted a laugh). 'I was sorry such a pledge had been required; but once given, it was natural they should stick to it. I certainly did say to an old friend of mine that if certain persons came into administration, they should feel bound to resign; but I dislike the idea of the Household resigning upon the formation of a new Cabinet.'

At this awkward point he began to show signs of illness or disorder, and could not go on. Many called out to him, 'Sit down!' which he did, and water and smelling-salts were brought; and after a pause he tried to proceed. He said that he had this

frank conversation with Lord Yarmouth, and that he thought they were committing the same fault as the projected Cabinet, because of the imputation which their resignation would necessarily cast upon their Government. Here he became unable to proceed so as to be intelligible, and sat down. But he was understood to say that in the last conversation with Lord Yarmouth, he admitted they were right after all. After a pause, it was suggested that the business be postponed to another day, which it was accordingly.

On the next occasion, June 19, he had recovered his spirits, and treated the whole question in a jocular and undignified strain. He laughed it off. His friend, Lord Yarmouth, was in bed (conveniently enough). Mr. Sheridan assured the House that he had seen him on his way down, and that he could not attend. The truth was, the little matter in which they were concerned was a '*mere marginal thing*.' So, passing that by, he would come to the statement that 'as a clincher of his disbelief in the resignation, he offered to make a bet with Mr. Tierney.' Here Tierney interrupted, and said, 'No; it was not with him.' 'Well, then,' went on Sheridan, 'I offered to make a bet with somebody or anybody' (a laugh). 'Now there was something very unlikely in this—I, who never bet with anybody, or play for a single guinea.' Then giving way to his vein of buffoonery—much out of place on this occasion—he went on: 'I wish

he had said I offered *to stake the money*, for I am sure no one would *have believed it*.' At which loud laughter broke out from all sides. 'However, I'll not cavil about it. I'll give him the £500 bet; that is, *I'll not give him the money*' (laughter again). 'At the same time, if every loose word is reported, "they are going to resign;" "I'll bet you they don't," etc., and made an accusation of, I'll take care as I walk down St. James's Street, and a friend says, "How d'ye do?"—I'll take three minutes to answer, and then be so shy of doing it that I'll have a witness to take down each word' (on which more laughter). 'Suppose he did say, "I'll bet you £500" —*five shillings would be more likely*' (laughter)—and so on. After this nonsense he at last gave his gloss, which was that he had been told of the resignation by Lord Yarmouth; but that it was *contingent on a circumstance which at the moment of the bet was more remote than ever*—that is, on their coming into office. 'So when Tierney said they were going to resign, I said, "I did not believe it." Is that an intelligible answer?' asked Mr. Sheridan. He then dwelt on his share in the negotiations, how he had pressed for renewing them when they seemed broken off. On the 5th he told Lord Moira what the two lords had stipulated for as to the Household, on which Lord Moira broke all off. He then said after this it was renewed on his suggestion, and Lord Moira wrote to the Regent to obtain the

power required by the two lords. Next day found it again broken off, and a friend told him Lord Liverpool had been appointed. He appealed to his friend Whitbread, in proof of these facts, who happened to be present.

He then diverged to the Catholic question, and made a glowing appeal to the new Government. He spoke of coalitions, which he said he did not like. His dear friend Fox's coalition with Lord North he would always regret; it had been a shock to the country. So with the one which was attempted between Pitt and Fox; and, '*impressed with this idea, he had done all in his power to support Lord Sidmouth against their united attacks.*' He did so because he saw that he was always impressed with a conviction that he was doing right. At which there was a laugh. He was sorry to find himself sneered at for that speech. Had not Addington done more to restore the country than any Minister? Here there was fresh laughter. He should like, he said, to have what he said disproved, rather than answered by a sneer.

Tierney answered him, reiterating his statement. He ridiculed the eulogium on Lord Sidmouth, and quoted Sheridan's sneers about the Doctor, and Doctor Fell. He declared he could not recall his giving a single vote. Mr. Ponsonby also stood up to deny that Lord Moira's letter, yielding the Household point, had not the meaning Sheridan put

on it. After this the matter was allowed to drop. From old liking it was not wished to put him further to the question. People spoke of the scene with shrugs and contempt. Mr. Wilberforce said it was 'twaddling.' But here, in this discredit, may be said to have closed the political career of Sheridan.*

'Sheridan,' says Mr. Grey Bennett, who was present, 'tried to vindicate himself in this debate, but the question still remained unanswered: "You knew of the intention of the Household to resign, why did you conceal it?" His whole speech was most doting, and showed hardly any remains of what he was: he forgot all facts, and made such an exhibition that it would have been cruel to have pressed him hard, which neither Tierney nor Ponsonby did. Tierney told me that he thinks him quite gone; that once during his speech his jaw became locked, so that he could not utter. I never witnessed a sight more distressing. I have no doubt he will never speak again.' The party, indeed, took a harsh, and in some degree unjust, view of Sheridan's behaviour. As to Mr. Grey Bennett's statement that 'Sheridan was always at Carlton House, where Lord Yarmouth said it was no secret, but universally known'—this, as we have seen, was not the case—'and his conduct deserves another name, as it must

* The persecuted Hastings, then eighty-two years old, and bowed with infirmities, lived to witness the fall of one who had made his reputation by assailing him.

have been something worse than baseness to have suffered his friends to have risked a question on which he knew the whole negotiation must break off, when he had a knowledge of a fact, which, if told, would have prevented the proposition being made.

'*June* 13*th*.—Last night at Brookes's, Sheridan entered into his defence before an audience certainly not favourable to him. He denied that Lord Yarmouth ever commissioned him to tell his friends, and added that if he had, he should have told him that he was not upon such terms of intimacy with Lords Grey and Grenville and Mr. Ponsonby as to warrant that liberty. Lord Kinnaird put him in mind of his speech to him on the Wednesday before, "that he thought the Regent ought not to give up his Household, and that he was sure and knew he would not." It may be asked then, under these circumstances, as he knew also that his friends made that a *sine quâ non*, and knew well that the Household would resign, why he did not step forward as a common friend to tell them there was no occasion to agitate the question, for the cause would not arise that would require it. Yet Whitbread told me that Lord Moira told him that Sheridan had been working night and day for weeks to remove the impressions that existed in the Regent's mind against Grey, pressing that he should be Prime Minister.'

Notwithstanding all this tide of obloquy, it must

be said that there is some force in Sheridan's defence, and something to be argued in his favour. For the fact that the Household intended resigning after the Ministry took office could not affect the *contract*, nor would it satisfy Lord Grey's demand as to the Household, to be told, 'Take office first, and you will see that afterwards they will all resign.' Sheridan therefore might have assumed that this private understanding did not touch the real question. Then Lord Yarmouth, as he explained in his speech, was one of his oldest and most intimate friends, and it seemed disloyal that this private conversation should be thus revealed. Lord Moira also had told the Regent when the latter declared that he was willing to give way on the Household point, '*Then your Royal Highness shan't part with one of them!*' Here was a refusal to yield, and Sheridan knew enough of Lords Grey and Grenville to see that on this the negotiation would break down. It is certain, as I have said, that it would never have been accepted on such a device as that the Household were to remain now and resign later. No one would trust the Regent so far. While urging this for Sheridan, it cannot be contended that he behaved with loyalty. I have little doubt but that what really occurred was this. Eager that his party should come in, he had seen from the first that it was impossible, for success, to exclude the two lords; he therefore pressed them on the Regent. Afterwards he found that this had lost

him his patron's favour, and that he repented of what he had done. From the haughty, distant tone in which Mr. Ponsonby professed ignorance of Sheridan's exertions, and sneered at those who enjoyed his society, it seems likely that he saw little chance of having office under the Greys and Grenvilles; and he could not resist that bit of spiteful advice to his friend not to do so foolish a thing as to resign. As to his offer of a bet to Tierney, it was too trivial to be made 'matter of charge.' 'Brougham,' says Grey Bennett, 'told me last night, the 21st, that he dined with Sheridan at Whitbread's, and that, upon a review of the case, it really was evident that he had not been as bad and as treacherous as before suspected. He saw a correspondence between Lord Yarmouth and Sheridan, in which Lord Yarmouth states that he bears a willing testimony to the truth of all the facts that Sheridan stated, and that satisfied Brougham as to the truth of the case, who said that after all there was nothing against Sheridan but the guilt of one of those lies he was so subject to tell. Whitbread was satisfied as to his conduct.'*

* So ingrained seems Sheridan's shiftiness that we notice traces of it in the most trifling incident. 'Sheridan,' writes the Speaker Abbot in January, 1811, 'told me to-day that the Prince of Wales had intended to give a dinner to him and all his Parliamentary friends on Sunday next; but that my dinner would supersede that intention, as Mr. Fox had decided long ago that the Prince's commands dissolved all other engagements *except* the Speaker's Parliamentary dinners. Sheridan the next day sent me a note,

THE HON^BLE M^RS NORTON.

*From the original picture by John Hayter.*

London. Richard Bentley & Son, 1886.

This was to be the last opportunity for such intrigues offered to Sheridan. Ill-success, it will have been seen, had attended his most elaborately planned efforts. But, in truth, the 'schemer' rarely enjoys substantial success. Moreover Sheridan had deserted both party and principle in favour of 'an illustrious individual,' whose instrument he made himself; and this led him on like an *ignis fatuus*, with the perpetual hope that he would arrive at the exercise of power as a sort of vizier. Alas! the Prince came to be Regent and virtual sovereign; but the luckless Sheridan was, in common phrase, 'left out in the cold.' With this incident all the Liberal chances of office were closed. But Sheridan seemed to cling closer to his patron.

It was unfortunate, too, that almost his last political act was an abandonment, under the same baleful influence, of one of the most cherished dogmas of the Liberal party. He had just made it a ground of charge against the two lords, that on the Household point they had sacrificed the Catholic question. But he was presently to exhibit

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"particularly sorry that it will *not be in his power* to have the honour of waiting on the Speaker on Sunday." *He dined with the Prince that day.*' In future the Speaker left him out of his parties, and told a friend, on an 'apprehension that his not being invited to my dinner was a mistake, I desired he would say "No;" but that, Sheridan having so often either *declined* or *not* come after he had *accepted*, I was led to suppose the sort of dinner was *disagreeable* to him.'

this most extraordinary *volte face*. Mr. Ward describes this curious scene, which took place not long after the Household fiasco. 'There was,' he says, 'a meeting, it seems, at Ponsonby's, at which he, among ninety gentlemen, was present. Ponsonby sent for them in order to relate a message which he had received through Sheridan from the Regent. The message was, "That the Catholic question was so far given up by the Ministers that it was no longer to be considered as a Ministerial question; and that everyone was to be allowed to take what line he would, without being considered as renouncing engagements to the Government." Ponsonby, however, added that at the same time that he received this, he had also received a communication from some, either of the Ministers or persons nearly connected with them (I did not learn which), by which he was given to understand this was all a misapprehension.

'The next day (Sunday), upon Lord Moira's calling at Carlton House by the Prince's order, the Prince sent out his page-in-waiting to him, to tell him that he had been so drunk the preceding night, he was not well enough to see him, but ordered the page to tell him that he (the Prince) had settled the Catholic question, which was not any longer to form a Government question. The Prince, later on Sunday, said the same thing to Sheridan, who asked if he might be authorized to say that from the Prince to Ponsonby; and the Prince said, "By all means."'

Mr. Rose met him at a dinner at Merchant Taylors', and had much conversation with him on the subject. Sheridan declared they ought to have joined, and that it was folly and madness to stir the Catholic question again during the King's life, thus reflecting his late friend Fox's opinion. The incidents we have been relating were destined to be the last desperate chance offered to him.

Of Ponsonby, who figured in this transaction, surprisingly little is known; indeed, with many, he suggests scarcely more than a name. Yet he was an important personage, and actually the official leader of the Whigs, *faute de mieux*. So little being known about him, the following account, taken from the 'Diary' already so often quoted, may be welcome:

'On the 8th died George Ponsonby. He had been seized in the House of Commons some few days before with a species of paralytic attack. He had dined in the House, and ate, as was his custom, very heartily; and while speaking he felt ill and sat down, saying that he had the cramp in his leg. He, however, soon fell back, and was carried into the Speaker's room. One leg and side was gone. He, however, soon recovered enough to know people. Lord Grey was sent for, and Ponsonby was removed to his own house in Curzon Street. For a day or two hopes were entertained, as he fully recovered his speech; but Taggart, the apothecary,

thought ill of his case from the first. He became, however, more drowsy every hour, and at last was only to be roused by being spoken loudly to. The last twenty-four hours the fever increased violently; and I fear, from what I have heard, the struggle was strong and violent, and the delirium great. He was a person, though short of stature, of considerable bodily strength, and the fight he made for life was said to have been dreadful. I fear the fatigue of the Session was one of the principal causes of his illness, and sitting so long in the Secret Committees, which deprived him of his usual exercise. Added to this, the great vexation he felt at the result of those Committees, and the knowledge which he had how much his conduct was disapproved of by all the active men of the party. Calcraft told me that though he said little upon this subject, yet he knew that he felt most deeply hurt, and had often complained to him of the hardships of his situation. I never knew a more amiable man—gentle, modest, and even shy, yet affable and simple in his manners—and so entirely unassuming as not to take upon himself what was strictly his own from his situation, his character, age, and the rank of the employment he held. As a leader of a party he wanted the activity which is so essential to that station, though his political principles were sound and friendly to the popular cause; yet he was never strong on the popular side, and there was a timidity not only in

action but even in expression, that made him a feeble opponent. Unlike Mr. Fox or Mr. Whitbread, he never stepped forward to rescue a friend out of a scrape, or drew the war on himself by defending what perhaps had better not have been said at all. In a word, he was a useful leader in one respect only, that his good character and honourable, unsullied life, and the moderation of his political principles, kept persons attached to the party who might have been driven from it, if anyone who had not his temper and mildness had been at the head. He was regretted by the Government, as there can be no doubt he was to them a good friend in the extent of his neutralizing the activity of others. He was not much regretted by the party, as all men had long felt his inefficiency as a leader ; but everyone lamented his loss as a private man, who for generosity, utter contempt of money, liberality of sentiment, and amiable gentleness of temper, was most remarkable. As a proof of his generosity, Duncannon told me that he had paid out of his own pocket above £200 to the person who wrote the notes to the Opposition requesting their attendance. Brougham asked him for money for the *Guardian*, and he gave immediately £200 ; and he was ready at all times to contribute money for any purpose that was wanted, to an extent not only beyond his means, but beyond what anyone was entitled to expect from him. His loss is a great blow to the

Grey interest in the House of Commons; and who is to lead, God knows!'

The defence offered by Mr. Moore for Sheridan's conduct in this transaction is very extraordinary, and almost betokens a sympathetic laxity in morals on the part of the biographer himself. It is an amiable toleration to call it 'the *least defensible* part of his public life'—an awkward compliment to a life where there was so little defensible. A lawyer or pleader may indeed deal with his client's case as more or less defensible; but defence is not the first thing thought of in the case of eminent politicians. 'It should be recollected,' goes on Mr. Moore, 'how broken he was, both in mind and body, at that period; his resources from the theatre at an end, the shelter of Parliament about to be taken from over his head also, and old age and sickness coming on, as every hope and comfort vanished. In that wreck of all around him, the friendship of Carlton House was the last asylum left to his pride and his hope; and that even character itself should, in a too zealous moment, have been one of the sacrifices offered up at the shrine that protected him, is a subject more of deep regret than wonder.' Which amounts to this, that when a man has lost his property, and is reduced to his last patron, he may part with honour and morality also—that 'character' may be sacrificed to the patron under the promptings of 'zeal;' while the spectator is to look on, not to censure or to 'wonder,' but to regret.

# CHAPTER VII.

## THE BURNING OF DRURY LANE THEATRE.

It is surprising to think that Sheridan should all this time have found heart or spirit sufficient to carry him through these stormy episodes, or, rather, that he should have found hope and energy to contend with the 'slings and arrows' of fortune. For during three years he had literally been a ruined man, and had lost his chief dependence in life. Some months before the struggle for Mr. Perceval's succession set in, he had fought all through these political scenes with unabated spirit and energy, exhibiting his wit and humour and versatility, though struggling with the results of a tremendous calamity —the destruction of his great theatre by fire. This wonderful buoyancy is rarely found in the man of pleasure, and as of right belongs to the more sober and orderly, who meet misfortune with a calm patience that is born of a regular life and sober habits. His ingenious fertility of resources stood him in stead of such virtues, until his last closing days, when all was desperate, and resources were in

fact exhausted. In 1809 this terrible blow had fallen upon him. The affairs of the theatre were hopelessly embarrassed, and the claims so large and confused that it seemed likely that he must soon have been forced to resign all interest in it. But still he might have exerted all his ingenuity to postpone the evil day, or have extricated himself by some fresh and unexpected device.

On the night of February 24, 1809, a motion on the Spanish War was before the House, when suddenly the windows were lit up with a blaze of light, and it was soon known that Drury Lane Theatre was on fire. 'Mr. Elliot and Lord Temple proposed to adjourn; but Mr. Sheridan said, with much calmness, that "whatever might be the extent of the private calamity, he hoped it would not interfere with the public business of the country." He then left the House; and, proceeding to Drury Lane, witnessed, with a fortitude which strongly interested all who observed him, the entire destruction of his property. It is said that, as he sat at the Piazza Coffee-house, during the fire, taking some refreshment, a friend of his having remarked on the philosophic calmness with which he bore his misfortune, Sheridan answered, "A man may surely be allowed to take a glass of wine *by his own fireside*."' The remark seems like one of the many spurious good things set down to Sheridan's credit. This was on a Friday in Lent when there was no per-

formance going on. Some plumbers who had been repairing the roof had gone away and left their fire burning. Mr. Boaden witnessed the conflagration, and saw the great statue of Apollo, which crowned the apex, sink into the flames. Within five minutes the whole had become a mass of fire. Sheridan looked on to the end; two friends, the Duke of York and Lord Mountjoy, being with him. To them he spoke feelingly of his unhappy subordinates now thrown out of employment, a much more likely speech to have been uttered than that about 'enjoying a glass by his own fireside.' There were some whispers of incendiarism; but such conflagrations are inevitable, and the necessary incidents of theatrical life. 'In less than a quarter of an hour,' says Mr. Boaden, 'the fire spread in one unbroken flame over the whole of the immense pile, extending from Brydges Street to Drury Lane; so that the pillar of fire was not less than 450 feet in breadth. In a very few minutes all that part of the theatre, together with the front row of boxes, was on fire, and the rapidity of the flames was such, that before twelve o'clock the whole of the interior was one blaze. The appearance was tremendously grand. Never before did I behold so immense a body of flame; and the occasional explosions that took place were awful beyond description. The interior was completely destroyed by one o'clock.'*

* When the Oxford Street Pantheon was burning in 1792, Sheridan was standing with Kelly, looking on. 'Observing how

'Two of the principal actors of Covent Garden Theatre,' Mr. Taylor tells us, 'were dining together in a distant box of the coffee-house; and having finished their repast, they agreed that it would be proper for them to approach Mr. Sheridan, and express their concern for the calamity which had happened. Hearing from them that they were going to observe the scene of devastation, he expressed his desire of going with them. They quitted the tavern, and mingled with the crowd, standing for some time at the end of the Piazza in Russell Street. Mr. Sheridan looked at the blazing ruin with the utmost composure. At length the gentlemen expressed their surprise that he could witness the destruction of his property with so much fortitude. His answer, which was recited to me by both of the gentlemen in identically the same words, was as follows: "There are but three things that should try a man's temper, the loss of what was the dearest object of his affections—that I have suffered; bodily pain, which, however philosophers may affect to despise it, is a serious evil—that I have suffered; but *the worst of all is self-reproach—that, thank*

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very high the flames were, he said, "Is it possible to extinguish the flames?" An Irish fireman close to us, and who heard him make the observation, said, "For the love of Heaven, Mr. Sheridan, don't make yourself uneasy, sir. By the powers, it will soon be down! sure enough, they won't have another drop of water in five minutes."'

*God, I never suffered!*"' An extraordinary instance of dulled conscience and self-delusion.

We have seen that the manager, in the midst of his own trouble, expressed commiseration for the unhappy performers, who had lost their all, and for whom there was little prospect of employment. 'The day after the fire, at dinner,' Kelly tells us, 'lamenting the dreadful situation in which we, as well as himself, were placed by the conflagration, he said that the first consideration was to find a place where we could perform, under his "Drury Lane patent;" for, though the theatre was destroyed, the patent was not, and that he would make every effort in his power to forward the interests and wishes of the company, without any private consideration of his own, until arrangements might be made to rebuild Drury Lane Theatre. The only request he would make, which was with him a *sine quâ non*, was, that the whole of the company, with heart and hand, should stand by one another, and that there should be no separation; "for," said he, "I am aware that many of the principal performers may get profitable engagements at the different provincial theatres; but what then would become of the inferior ones, some of whom have large families? Heaven forbid that they should be deserted! No; I most earnestly recommend and entreat, that every individual belonging to the concern should be taken care of. Let us make a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all

together ; and above all, make the general good our sole consideration. Elect yourselves into a committee ; but keep in your remembrance even the poor sweepers of the stage, who, with their children, must starve, if not protected by our fostering care.'

These sentiments were no doubt genuine ; but, as was too often the case with Sheridan, were as transitory as they were fervent ; and it will be seen that presently he was reported to be looking after his own interests, and had 'thrown over' the players. He accordingly not only provided for keeping the company together, and securing another theatre, but took prompt measures for restoring the enterprise, and actually looked forward to being in a better position. But few guessed in what a desperate state the great theatre was, or what a load of debt had accumulated during the fifteen years of its existence. Extrication was hopeless. The first thing was to provide for the large staff of employés, who had lost all their property with their situations. It was determined to apply for a license to the Chamberlain, and take the Lyceum or New Opera House for performances. This plan seems to have been impeded by Mr. Arnold, who, hearing of the scheme, contrived to secure the building from the proprietors, and then came to treat with Sheridan, and make a profit.* Here the perform-

* This was the person who also contrived to 'buy up' Charles Mathews and his talents, for a trivial sum, during a term of years, to his utter misery and almost ruin.

ances were given with some success for a short time. But even under these conditions awkward rumours began to be circulated as to Sheridan's arrangements, which he had contrived to make profitable for himself and his family.* These proceedings were commented on angrily. The case of the performers was all, he said, he was concerned about, yet he was coming forward to oppose their performances unless they shared with him and his son. When they tried to secure a license for themselves,

* In the *Dramatic Censor* it was said, 'If an advertisement signed by Mr. Peake is to be credited, Sheridan does not, *in propriâ persona*, receive any stipend for his managerial assistance; but I understand him to have succeeded in fixing the whole of his family, and some of his dependents, upon this little show-box of a theatre, viz., Mr. Thomas Sheridan, his son; Mr. Ward, his brother-in-law; Mr. Homan, his nephew; Mr. Peake, his secretary and treasurer; Mr. Burgess, his attorney, etc., all of whom are said to derive stipends from the Lord Chamberlain's license. No sooner was the license obtained, than most of the veteran performers were given to understand that they could not be continued, consistently with the number of new performers which it had been thought necessary to engage, or *strict economy;* accordingly Mr. Wroughton, Mr. R. Palmer, Mrs. Harlow, Mr. Gibbon, Mr. Cook, and several others, as it is reported, received their dismission. Happily for some of them, they knew their ground; and a hint or two of a memorial to the late Earl of Dartmouth (who was one of the best men that ever filled an important public office), and an appeal to the public, had its effect, and secured their being re-engaged; but the more timid and the defenceless part of them are now out of employ, and in a state of misery.' Full accounts of these proceedings are given in the *Mirror*, then edited by Hill; and it is evident from these and other theatrical papers, that Sheridan was now highly unpopular in the profession.

he interposed, and exerted his influence with the Chamberlain to have it refused. But the clamour was so great in favour of the poor burnt-out players that it had to be granted.

The next step was the sensible one of applying to a thorough man of business, a successful brewer, patriot, and friend, a man of pleasant humour, universally liked—Mr. Samuel Whitbread. This gentleman cheerfully undertook the task of forming a committee, and organizing a scheme. A searching examination of the accounts was made, and the enterprise was found to be hopelessly bankrupt. It was reported that there was owing to creditors, on foot of interest to shareholders, tradesmen, and others, including the value of Sheridan's and other patentees' interest, the enormous sum of £436,000! In this, of course, the value of the original shares, now lost for ever, was not included. Of this large amount about £200,000 was due as arrears of interest to the shareholders.

After much negotiation, meetings, and debates, it was found that nothing could be done without mutual compromise. If the old debtors held out for the full amount they would get nothing, and a new theatre could not be built; while if a new theatre were built, something must be paid to debtors. In this view it was agreed that the large sum of £436,000, or thereabouts, should be reduced by composition to a fourth, namely, £109,000, out of which

Sheridan was to receive £24,000, out of which the Linleys were to be paid off, his son Tom £12,000, and Mrs. Richardson £6,000. The new house, the present Drury Lane, was to cost £150,000; but, as it turned out, £212,000 was expended. The stock to be raised was to be £300,000, while £30,000 was in hand, derived from the insurance.

To add to the unfortunate manager's difficulties, a project was now put forward of building a third theatre, which was seriously taken up. Moneyed persons in the City were found to 'back' the plan, and it was supported by the Lord Mayor and others; connected with which arose a new danger, for inquiries were being made into the always ticklish question of 'the exclusive patents;' and the position of the Drury Lane patent at the moment was not very secure. When the theatre was burnt, it had actually only a few years left of a short 'running patent.' Killigrew's patent had been purchased, but there was a doubt whether this was to be '*eternally exclusive*.' This question of the third theatre was regularly argued before the Privy Council on March 6, 1810, the interesting feature being that Sheridan himself appeared among the lawyers, and argued his own case with much spirit. Mr. Sheridan did not, however, rely on these purely forensic exertions; but, characteristically enough, had recourse to those old useful arts which had done him service on many an occasion. This plan of a third

theatre, which he so vehemently and spiritedly opposed as an injustice to the proprietors of the patent, he was actually pushing in his own interests ; and Mr. Moore, apparently in innocent unconsciousness of its meaning, furnishes such a plan regularly drawn up, and he himself was to have the control of the enterprise. I find it further stated in the papers that he had actually offered to sell his patent to the new speculators. It seems only too likely that when he was to be deprived of control over the new theatre, he took this ready mode of indemnifying himself.

Mr. Warren having replied to him, Sheridan then had the last word, which was in his pleasantest vein :

'The learned gentleman has been exceedingly witty. He says, I have endeavoured to establish that there is no necessity for a third theatre. I did distinctly say upon that point that I did not go the length that Mr. Leach went ; but said that there might be room for a third one, but not of the size of the former Drury Lane Theatre, and that I had a right to claim the privilege of setting it up. The learned gentleman has not touched upon the subject as to the £200,000 being already deposited in the bank, although he had received a direct contradiction of the statement from me. As to the circumstance of my signing the petition, and none of the others concerned signing it, it is true I cannot make a body corporate contrary to their own inclination ;

but the learned gentleman may observe that I pray that it may be vested in trustees. Now as to the "Sleeping Beauty," it might be said, the time to make a revival of her was eighteen years ago: we did then arouse her in all her loveliness and charms, and the sum of £150,000 was then subscribed, upon the supposition that she is not dead, but sleepeth. I am doubtful as to the superior respect due to this Court, but there is a degree of flippancy resorted to by counsel in other courts which I am surprised to see had recourse to here. The learned gentleman reminds your lordships that the property of Drury Lane Theatre is now smoking in its ruins: what effect this may have upon your lordships' feelings, I know not; but of this I am sure, that you never would have heard of this application if it were not smoking in its ruins. The learned gentleman has not only misrepresented the facts in the petitions, but has also misrepresented the law. Why does the learned gentleman state that there is an Act which takes power from his Majesty as to granting licences, and gives that power to magistrates? The statute of George II. did not authorize the magistrates to grant licences for the drama, but merely for dancing and pantomime. As to the learned gentleman's *wit*, I must say that I am very much pleased with it; and therefore I will allow him to supply me with *wit*, if he in return will allow me to furnish him with *law*.'

Mr. Warren replied in the same facetious spirit:

'My lords, as to the "Sleeping Beauty," she never was roused from her slumber; she received a little jog in her passage from Covent Garden to Drury Lane, but not sufficient to awake her. I have no wish to comment on what Mr. Sheridan has said; but I desire to decline his proposed exchange, and am contented to remain in possession of my wit, and that he should keep his law.'

Unfortunately these proceedings before the Privy Council brought out a number of petitions from persons interested in the property, and whose piteous stories all seemed to point to spoliation. Among them was one from Warren's widow and others, proprietors of the remaining fourth of Killigrew's patent, in which serious charges were made against Sheridan. At the time of rebuilding the last theatre about the year 1791, it had been found necessary to purchase Killigrew's dormant patent. This was contracted for, and £9,000 had been paid to Mr. Harris. It turned out that for nearly twenty years the balance of £5,000 had not been paid, and interest had accrued. In a petition addressed to the Privy Council, the following characteristic details came to light:

'That in order to enable the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre to hold out to the public a permament and absolute title to and proprietorship in the said patent, without which no solid security could possibly be afforded to the persons invited to subscribe the

sum of £150,000 for re-building that theatre, Mr. Sheridan (then the acting proprietor of the theatre) in June, 1792, contracted, through the Right Hon. Mr. Fox, since deceased, with your petitioner, Mr. White, on behalf of himself and Mrs. Martindale, or her trustees, for the purchase of their share and interest in the said patent for £5,000, to be paid on or before the 25th of December, 1792.

'That though it was held forth by Mr. Sheridan and the other proprietors, through advertisement, to the public, as an inducement to persons to subscribe for the sum then necessary to be raised for re-building Drury Lane Theatre, that the trustees or proprietors of that theatre had purchased and paid for the entire interest in such patent, on the faith and credit of which assurance, and that the same was inseparably attached to the theatre, the several subscribers completed and paid up their subscriptions, yet to this hour no part of the said sum of £5,000 or the interest thereof hath been paid to your petitioners, for the agreed purchase-money, or price of their share and interest in the said patent.

'That your petitioners, some time since, filed a bill in the Court of Chancery against Mr. Sheridan, to compel a specific performance of the before-mentioned contract, to which bill he put in an answer admitting the contract, but affecting to deny that the sum of £5,000 was the agreed price to be paid for the purchase of your petitioners' share in

the said patent, and pretending that he understood the price to be paid was no more than in proportion, as respects your petitioners' share in the patent, to the sum of £11,500, which had been paid to Mr. Harris for his three-fourth share and interest in such patent.

'That the perplexity of the concerns of Drury Lane Theatre, and various circumstances standing in the way of a prospect of procuring payment of such £5,000 and interest, have induced your petitioners hitherto to forego the further prosecution of such suit, which is still depending, and will be prosecuted, if justice is not otherwise speedily dealt out to them by the payment of the said sum of £5,000 and the interest thereof, from the 10th of August, 1792, on which day Mr. Sheridan, by his letter to your petitioner, George White, declared his (Mr. Sheridan's) acquiescence in the settlement so made by Mr. Fox with Mr. White, viz., for the purchase of the share and interest of your petitioners in the said patent for the said sum of £5,000.'

All this caused a check, and, as the treasurer declared, the subscriptions did not come in until it was announced that they were about to settle for the entire patent. They had no funds, however, to buy this 'quarter,' which with interest reached to the sum of £9,000, almost as much as Harris's three-quarters; and then, as a happy resource, they secured a running patent for twenty-one years, which

served as well. The debt was ultimately discharged, Mr. Dunn tells us, on December 17, 1813, by payment of £9,561 12s. 5d. The scheme was now brought before Parliament. Mr. Mellish on May 9, 1811, moved the second reading of the Bill. It was opposed by Mr. Whitbread, Mr. Peter Moore, and others, friends of Sheridan, who urged that the new enterprise was *en train.* The House was friendly, and Sheridan pleaded his own case with much warmth. Later, Mr. Taylor moved for an inquiry into the propriety of granting theatrical patents at all, but this was negatived. It was no doubt felt that it would be ungracious and ungenerous to stir such a question, when the fortunes of so many were involved; and there was besides a general wish to 'help Old Sherry' in his great misfortune. Much of the success of the general scheme was due to Mr. Whitbread's resolute energy and rough eloquence—(the latter the Duchess of Gordon had likened to 'the caperings of his own dray-horses'). He soon triumphed over every obstacle, and brought order out of chaos. Presently the prospectuses were issued, fortified by an imposing list of names: the Regent, seven royal dukes, many noblemen, and Members of Parliament heading the list. Lord Holland was the chairman.

The theatre, the present stately and imposing edifice, remarkable for its magnificent approaches, vestibules, rotunda, and noble staircase, all designed

by Mr. Wyatt, was actually completed within two Octobers. It was constructed, of course, to hold a vast number of persons, or about £600 in money—a huge 'Donn Daniel' indeed, which made enjoyment impossible or most difficult. As we have seen, it was felt that the first principle of success for the enterprise was to exclude Sheridan from any connection with it. The bait held out to him was the prospect of ready cash to be paid down for his shares; but it was found that he was so involved—demands, claims, etc., flowing in—that it became impossible to hand over the money to him; and for the protection of the interests of the new enterprise, it became necessary to investigate in the most thorough manner all these complicated claims. Small advances, however, were made to him out of the probable balance; and Mr. Whitbread, who felt he was trustee for money that was not his own, was obliged to behave to him in a sternly uncompromising and business-like fashion.

In this state of things, it may be conceived, his humour was fractious and petulant, and he at last broke out indignantly at what he thought was the shameful treatment he was receiving. He saw plainly that the intention was to get rid of him. For a time he was profuse in his gratitude to the friend who so successfully extricated him; but this feeling soon gave place to bitter resentment and complaints. He had offered to assist the architect

with his practical experience and advice; but was told by the committee, 'You are in no way answerable if a bad theatre is built: it is not you who build it; and if we come to the strict right of the thing, you have no business to interfere.' And further on they say, 'Will you but stand aloof, and everything will go smooth, and a good theatre shall be built.' As if, argued poor Sheridan, 'there was a man, woman, or child in the whole kingdom that would not hold him responsible for the failure.' Sheridan's advice and experience might have been profitable after all. Dowton, the actor, in his examination before alluded to, said: 'I remember a very few years after Drury Lane was built, Mr. Whitbread did me the honour of consulting me a good deal, along with Mr. Dunn and some others, about the size of the theatre, and I always said, "Your house is too large; you are laying out too much money in building the theatre; it can never answer; you can never see a return for it; £250,000 or £270,000 is too much." The theatre went on, and became excessively involved in consequence, and the last time I saw him, a few days before his death, he said, "Dowton, I always considered you a good-hearted fellow, but a wrong-headed fellow. You said the theatre would never answer; you are a true prophet, and my golden dreams are over. You have been right in your advice; can you tell us what to do?" I said, "I think the only thing you

can do is to apply to Parliament to dispose of your theatre, and that they should do so by Covent Garden; get rid of it, and let it be thrown open, and get a theatre on a smaller scale, for this theatre can never answer." I think a theatre, to answer all the purposes of the drama, might be built for one-fourth of the sum they laid out in those immense buildings. I am at a loss to imagine how they came to lay out so much money when they saw that the former theatre—Sheridan's theatre, as it was called—failed, from the immense sums that were laid out. I remember Mr. Sheridan saying the day after the fire, "There is one consolation, as the theatre is burnt down and we must build another, we must build a theatre where we can be seen and heard, and not go to such a monstrous expense in future."' Within a few years the whole had to be remodelled and made smaller—its present size. Sheridan had agreed to let his payment stand over until the theatre was built; but presently became impatient, and was actually giving *bonds* on the fund, and making piteous and peremptory demands for himself.*

* Some of these claims were more ingenious than correct. 'He alludes,' wrote Whitbread, 'to the claims he has already created upon that fund. He must, besides, recollect the list of names he sent to me some time ago, of persons to whom he felt himself in honour bound to appropriate to each his share of that fund, in common with others for whose names he left a blank, and who, he says in the same letter, have written engagements from him. Besides, he has communicated both to Mr. Taylor and to Mr. Shaw, through me,

Mr. Moore gives a letter from Whitbread, offering, on the part of the committee, a box in the new theatre to Mrs. Sheridan. This was a graceful act, a present worth a considerable sum of money. Not the slightest acknowledgment was offered; and Mr. Whitbread, fancying the neglect intentional, wrote a rather rebuking letter to the lady, beginning 'My dear Esther.' But there could scarcely have been any intention of offence, as only a week had elapsed without a reply, which the lady sent in a very grateful spirit.*

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offers to impound the whole of the sum to answer the issue of the unsettled demands made upon him by those gentlemen respectively.

'You know, my dear sir, that I grieve for the sad state of Mr. Sheridan's affairs. I would contribute my mite to their temporary relief, if it would be acceptable; but as one of the committee, entrusted with a public fund, I can do nothing.'

* 'My dear Mr. Whitbread,' she wrote in September, 1812, 'I beg you will return my best thanks to the committee for the attention they have shown me respecting a box at Drury Lane Theatre. I know nothing of the same kind that could have been equally valuable to me, and accept the offer in the terms in which it is made. With much gratitude,

'I am,

'E. SHERIDAN.'

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OUT OF PARLIAMENT—1812.

BUT now was to come the last blow of all, which was to shipwreck the once brilliant Sheridan. Parliament was dissolved, and he was destined to take his leave of the House in which he had won so many triumphs, and which for nearly forty years he had enlivened with his sallies. His last recorded flash of humour in the House is said to have been on July 16, 1812, when he was opposing a sort of Coercion Bill for Ireland. 'He was ridiculing the past fears of insurrection in this country; and observed, that after all the alarm "*nine* tailors and *one* pike had been discovered in a back garret in Tooley Street in the Borough;" and a preceding speaker having said there could be no strife where there was no opposition, he added a rather forcible but humorous illustration.

What proved to be his last deliverance in the House of Commons was uttered on July 21; it was a vehement denunciation of Bonaparte, in

answer to Mr. Whitbread, who had blamed the Government for putting aside overtures of peace. Sheridan was very sarcastic on his friend for putting faith in the perfidious Corsican, 'whose professions,' he declared, 'were nothing more than a wretched manœuvre to cloak his designs upon Russia, and to deceive the people of France into a belief in his pacific intentions.' Mr. Whitbread, much hurt by the irony with which he had been treated, replied in a strain of equal asperity. Sheridan, in reply, dwelt more largely on the character of Napoleon, describing 'his ambition as boundless, his rapacity as insatiable, and his treachery as notorious.' He then observed that though it was out of our power to command success, resistance was nevertheless indispensably necessary, even with the hazard of defeat; and concluded in these animating words: 'But if we fall, and if after our ruin there shall possibly arise an impartial historian, his language will be, "Britain fell, and with her fell all the best securities for the charities of human life, the power, the honour, the fame, the glory, and the liberties not only of herself, but of the whole civilized world."' A fine tribute to the principle of self-sacrifice, to which, alas! his own course had been a flagrant contradiction.

There was now before him the highly critical struggle of re-election. It had become vital, even for the safety of his person, that he should be

returned for Stafford or some other seat, and for that return ready cash was necessary. He applied desperately to his friend Whitbread for some of the theatre money, and was told that he would be glad 'to propose to the committee to agree to anything practicable; and you may make all practicable, if you will have resolution to look at the state of the account between you and the committee, and agree to the mode of its liquidation.' But 'looking at the state of the account' was not likely to tend to the profit of poor, broken Sheridan's affairs. In a cold, business-like fashion, Whitbread proceeded to add up the various claims which menaced the precarious balance: 'You will recollect the £5,000 pledged to Peter Moore to answer demands; the certificates given to Giblet, Ker, Ironmonger, Cross, and Hirdle, five each at your request; the engagements given to Ellis and myself, and the arrears to the Linley family. All this taken into consideration will leave a large balance still payable to you. Still there are upon that balance the claims upon you by Shaw, Taylor, and Grubb, for all of which you have offered to leave the whole of your compensation in my hands, to abide the issue of arbitration.* This

* 'Mr. Taylor,' says Moore, 'advanced a claim upon Mr. Whitbread for the payment of upwards of £20,000, which he pretended was due to him from the proprietors of the late theatre, and threatened to file a Bill in Chancery to obtain an injunction to restrain the expenditure of the subscription money until he was

may be managed by your agreeing to take a considerable portion of your balance in bonds, leaving those bonds in trust to answer the events.' This was a hopeless state of things, and gives a clear idea of the situation of the unhappy man.

Mr. Moore's fashion of dealing with his hero's failings, extenuating in a peculiar mode only to damage, is illustrated by his account of the business relations of Mr. Whitbread and his friend. 'While Sheridan,' he says, 'like those painters who endeavour to disguise their ignorance of anatomy by an indistinct and *furzy* outline, had an imposing method of generalizing his accounts and statements, which, to most eyes, concealed the negligence and fallacy of the details, Mr. Whitbread, on the contrary, with an unrelenting accuracy, laid open the minutiæ of every transaction, and made evasion as impossible to others, as it was alien and inconceivable to himself. He was, perhaps, the only person whom Sheridan had ever found proof against his powers of persuasion; and this rigidity naturally mortified his pride full as much as it thwarted and disconcerted his views.' This is, of course, intended as a plea for

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paid. Such an unexpected claim alarmed Mr. Whitbread, and he was advised by counsel not to pay the proprietors any money until it was disposed of. But, as Sheridan showed, they were his by the final arrangement, signed by Taylor and the Duke of Bedford. They seem to have been mortgaged to Hammersleys for moneys to pay the performers.'—*MS. Brit. Mus.*

indulgence, conveying that this was but 'Sheridan's way'—an amiable weakness, privileged and understood by all. But this 'furziness' in money matters —'generalizing,' with a view to concealing the 'fallacy of details'—must with an authorized examiner of accounts have an awkward if not ugly name; and it is amusing to find that process called 'rigidity' in investigation, producing in the detected a mortification and 'disconcerting of his views,' which in another person would be accounted incidents in an attempt to obtain cash on false pretences.

Another passage, in which the *rôle* of the 'd——d good-natured friend' is assumed, is too good to be passed over. One would be inclined to think that Mr. Moore himself held these light and airy views as to the code of obligation which should regulate the life of a brilliant writer or wit: 'A concession, which Sheridan himself *had volunteered*, namely, the postponement of his right of being paid the amount of his claim till after the theatre should be built, was also a subject of much acrimonious discussion between the two friends, Sheridan applying to this condition *that sort of lax interpretation which would have left him the credit of the sacrifice without its inconvenience*, and Whitbread, with a firmness of grasp to which, unluckily, the other had been unaccustomed in business, holding him to the strict letter of his voluntary agreement with the

subscribers.' Which means that having made an agreement, Sheridan wished to repudiate it while pretending to hold by it. Yet Mr. Moore presently describes 'a last hard struggle of *pride* and *delicacy*' against the most deadly foe of both, pecuniary involvement, which gathers round its victims, fold after fold, till they are at length crushed in its inextricable clasp. This flourish, which so pleasantly makes pecuniary embarrassments a sort of cruel fatalism, and seems to excuse the victim from making any exertion of principle or character, need not be taken seriously. But he further gives an elaborate plea in mitigation, conceived in the same spirit, which it is worth while to consider for a moment.

As hopeless embarrassments were associated with the career we have been following, it is astonishing to hear Mr. Moore, when winding up his history, offering this extraordinary vindication, which seems meant to prove that Sheridan was almost too scrupulous in his money transactions:

'So far from never paying his debts, as is often asserted of him, he was, in fact, *always paying;* but in such a careless and indiscriminate manner, and with so little justice to himself or others, as often to leave the respectable creditor to suffer for his patience, while the fraudulent dun was paid two or three times over. Never examining accounts nor referring to receipts, he seemed as if (in imitation of

his own Charles, preferring generosity to justice) he wished to make *paying* as like as possible to *giving*. Interest, too, with its usual silent accumulation, swelled every debt; and I have found several instances among his accounts where the interest upon a small sum had been suffered to increase till it outgrew the principal—"*minima pars ipsa puella sui*."

'Notwithstanding all this, however, his debts were by no means so considerable as has been supposed. In the year 1808, he empowered Sir R. Berkeley, Mr. Peter Moore, and Mr. Frederick Homan, by power of attorney, to examine into his pecuniary affairs and take measures for the discharge of all claims upon him. These gentlemen, on examination, found that his *bonâ-fide* debts were about ten thousand pounds, while his apparent debts amounted to five or six times as much. Whether from conscientiousness or from pride, however, he would not suffer any of the claims to be contested, but said that the demands were all fair, and must be paid just as they were stated; though it was well known that many of them had been satisfied more than once. These gentlemen, accordingly, declined to proceed any further with their commission.

'On the same false feeling he acted in 1813-14, when the balance due on the sale of his theatrical property was paid him in a certain number of shares. When applied to by any creditor, he would give him

one of these shares, and allowing his claim entirely on his own showing, leave him to pay himself out of it, and refund the balance.

'The consequence, however, of this continual paying was that the number of his creditors gradually diminished, and that ultimately the amount of his debts was, taking all circumstances into account, by no means considerable. Two years after his death it appeared by a list made up by his solicitor from claims sent in to him, in consequence of an advertisement in the newspapers, that the *bonâ-fide* debts amounted to about five thousand five hundred pounds.'

It is impossible to deal seriously with the statement that he was always engaged in paying his debts. The comparatively small obligation he was found to have incurred is disproved by the fact that the important items in the balance are left out. A single instance will illustrate this. He obtained from the Linleys, and enjoyed the profits of, their share in the theatre, which he never paid for, though they ultimately secured a small sum from the new shareholders. Again, the invitation to send in claims on his death was more probably a formality, as it was known that the assets could have been only trifling. Again, in 1808, we are told, he himself acknowledged to owing some £50,000 or £60,000 —'apparent debts,' Mr. Moore calls them. Strange to say, the delicacy of Sheridan would not allow

these claims to be *investigated;* but we are not informed that they were paid. The truth was, there were some of these transactions which it was undesirable should be probed.* It was only fitting that a committee, administering the moneys of a joint-stock company which were to pay off contending claims, should act strictly and warily, and decline to make advances or favour a particular claimant.

At the election Sheridan contrived to get down to Stafford, where he had received encouragement from an influential Catholic family, the Jerninghams, the head of which, Lord Stafford, promised his support. To a friend there he wrote in sanguine strains of his hopes, declaring that he had given up 'a safe seat' for the gratification of standing for his old constituency. 'I have determined,' he wrote, 'to accept the very cordial invitations I have received from *old friends* in that quarter, and (though entirely secure of my seat at Ilchester, and, indeed, even of the second seat for my son, through the liberality of Sir W. Manners) to return to the old goal from whence

* Sheridan's hands were small and delicate, and a cast taken from one suggested this couplet:

'Good at a fight, but better at a play;
God-like in giving, but the Devil to pay.'

A bust of Garrick was once observed on Foote's desk close to some money. 'I wonder you trust him so near your cash,' a friend said, alluding to the actor's supposed avarice. 'But you see he has no hands,' was the reply.

I started thirty-one years since! You will easily see that arrangements at Ilchester may be made towards assisting me, in point of expense, to meet *any opposition*, and, *in that respect*, nothing will be *wanting*. It will, I confess, be very gratifying to me to be again elected by *the sons of those* who chose me in the year *eighty*, and adhered to me so stoutly and so long. I think I was returned for Stafford seven, if not eight times, including two most tough and expensive contests; and in taking a temporary leave of them I am sure my credit must stand well, for not a shilling did I leave unpaid. I have written to the Jerninghams, who, in the handsomest manner, have ever given me their warmest support; and, as no political object interests my mind so much as the Catholic cause, I feel it to be no presumption to add, that other respectable interests in the neighbourhood will be with me.'

His careless treatment of the Stafford burgesses, with the knowledge that he had no money, did not favour his prospects. It was said, indeed, that on a former occasion when he had found himself unable to fulfil his abundant promises, he had lavishly engaged to provide for his supporters by posts in his theatre. 'Numbers of those who voted for him, or their friends and relatives, were appointed to various offices in Drury Lane Theatre and the Opera House. In a short time, however, he found opportunities of obliging new friends; for, alas!

more than four-fifths of his first corps of *protégés* were compelled to relinquish their situations, from *receiving no pay !*'*

* It was unfortunate for Sheridan that the constituency he had chosen and clung to for so long, should have been one of the most corrupt in the kingdom. Lord Campbell's later experiences of the borough have been already alluded to, as well as his significant declaration that the system of wholesale purchase of the electors had been introduced by Sheridan. Captain Gronow's experience—some twenty years later—is equally characteristic. This was at the first election after the Reform Bill, and he frankly tells how cordially he fell in with the desires of his electors :

'On the morning after my arrival at the Star Inn, several hundred electors assembled, in military array, under my windows, and on my appearance received me with three cheers. One of the leaders of this worthy band of brothers—who, to do them justice, were no hypocrites, but came immediately to business—then spoke out thus : "Now, Gronow, my old boy, we like what we have heard about you, your principles, and all that sort of thing ; we will therefore all vote for you if——" Here every man in the crowd struck his breeches-pocket several times with his open hand. After this expressive pantomime, the speaker continued, "You know what we mean, old fellow ? If not—you understand, you won't do for Stafford."

'His comrades loudly cheered their leader ; and I then made them a speech of some length, setting forth the principles upon which I presented myself to their notice and solicited their suffrages ; concluding by significantly assuring them that they should all have reason to be well satisfied with me.

'I had plenty of money in those days, and was determined that no one should outbid me for the support of these worthy and independent gentlemen, so I set to work to bribe every man, woman, and child in the ancient borough of Stafford. I engaged numerous agents, opened all the public-houses which were not already taken by my opponents, gave suppers every night to my supporters, kissed all their wives and children, drank their health

When Sheridan was Treasurer to the Navy a deputation from these venal supporters came up to London to wait on him, one of whom was an alderman, with a view to reminding him of his various promises to provide for them when he had the power of doing so. He used to relate the scene himself, with much injudicious ridicule of his friends. The alderman told him they had come up to congratulate him on being in such a fine house and office, reminding him then of certain old outstanding bills and promises. 'I replied, "I can do nothing for you now in the way of cash, as I have not received a farthing yet from my office." "True, true, Mr. Sheridan," returned the alderman; but you surely won't forget your promise to provide your friends with good places, now you have got into a snug berth yourself." "Oh, certainly not," I replied; "as soon as the

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in every sort of abominable mixture, and secured my return against great local interest; for, at the close of the poll, the numbers were:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Chetwynd . . . . . | 392 |
| Gronow . . . . . | 253 |
| Blount . . . . . | 230' |

On the meeting of Parliament a petition was presented against his return, on the impudent ground that 'he had not bribed the electors sufficiently.' It was read amid roars of laughter; but the Speaker declined to receive it. It is to be suspected that this was a legacy from Mr. Sheridan and his system; for he had made it a tradition that each elector in the borough should receive a sum of money for his vote.

necessary arrangements are completed, I mean to put half a hundred of you into the Excise, as many more into the public offices as clerks, and the rest, I suppose, may be comfortably provided for as officers, either in the army or navy. I have only to regret that I can do nothing for the *ladies;* but I suppose they will be pretty well pleased when they see their husbands and sons taken care of." "Certainly, certainly, your right honourable worship," replied the other man, who was a master shoemaker; "and we hope you will show no favour, but treat us all alike." I, of course, assured them that there should be no *partiality* manifested in the distribution of my *favours:* and so, sending my respects to the whole corporation, I bowed my visitors to the drawing-room door, and with a most patronizing smile, and a hearty shake of the hand, wished them a pleasant journey back to Stafford. In a few seconds one of them—the shoemaker—without being observed by his companion, returned into the room to get a *frank*, for the purpose of enclosing a letter to his wife, as he did not intend to leave town for a few days. His friend, the alderman, had nearly got to the bottom of the stairs before he missed him; when, turning his head, he instantly suspected foul play, and rushing back up the stairs, he met his companion at the door, just at the moment that he was putting the *frank* into his pocket. This was enough —the enraged wine-merchant dashed into my apart-

ment, and with clenched fists, and eyes sparkling with fury, exclaimed, "D——n me, if I didn't always think you were a scamp, Sheridan!"' The alderman, it seems, suspected his companion had been stealing a march upon him, and it was with difficulty that Sheridan could appease him.

It may have been on this occasion that Dowton, the actor, who found it impossible to extract his arrears from him, actually threatened to go down to Stafford and expose him on the hustings. The comedian was not unlikely to have been as good as his word, and some sort of arrangement—such as Sheridan had the secret of contriving in an emergency—was made. The shoemaking interest was strong in the borough, but seems not to have been conciliated, even though his son 'Tom' had given some toast about all the world having Stafford work 'under their feet.'

All this was not encouraging for the candidate; and it was noted that as the moment for action drew near, a sort of lethargy, from which nothing roused him, appeared to settle on him. This was, no doubt, a feeling of sheer hopelessness. 'Mr. Edward Jerningham exerted himself to the utmost, as did the most illustrious person in the kingdom, to rouse Sheridan to proper activity. All was in vain: he did not leave London till it was impossible he should reach Stafford in time to make an effective canvass. When he reached it, he loitered at the inn, while the mob clamoured for him. The conse-

quence was that he lost his election. But such was the fascination of his manner, and such the attraction of his name, that, before he left the town, the electors seemed to be in despair that they had not voted for him, and a large proportion of them would escort him out of the place.'

He returned to London a ruined man, and in utter despair. For him it now seemed that there was no further hope in life, he being no longer connected with the theatre nor with the House of Commons, 'the two anchors by which he held.' He wrote some passionate reproaches to the man whom he accused of being the cause of his disaster: 'Whitbread! on the subject of your refusing to advance to me the £2,000 I applied for to take with me to Stafford, out of the large sum confessedly due to me (unless I signed some paper containing I know not what, and which you presented to my breast like a cocked pistol on the last day I saw you), I will not dwell. *This, and this alone, lost me my election.* You deceive yourself if you give credit to any other causes, which the pride of my friends chose to attribute our failure to, rather than confess our poverty. I do not mean now to expostulate with you, much less to reproach you; but sure I am that when you contemplate the positive injustice of refusing me the accommodation I required, and the irreparable injury that refusal has cast on me, overturning, probably, all the honour and independence

of what remains of my political life, you will deeply reproach yourself.'*

It was unfortunate that one of the last acts of Sheridan's chequered life should be of a dubious kind, and in keeping with so many of the transac-

* Much ridicule, instead of sympathy or pity, was expended on the fallen politician, and these verses were circulated :

ON A CERTAIN GENTLEMAN'S DISCOMFITURE AT STAFFORD.

'Sherry to Stafford lately hied ;
Stafford, the great St. Crispin's pride :
He smooth'd his face, he went *unshod ;*
He swore, no shoes like theirs, by G— !
He had the Regent's dread commands,
Shoes should be worn *on feet and hands !*
The Court had deem'd the fashion meet,
That men should walk *on hands and feet !*
"Give me your votes ; I'll do such things,
I'll make you great as little kings !"—
Crispin, who erst did Britons shield
On Agincourt's most glorious field,
Look'd from a cloud in fierce disdain,
And sent him back to Court again.'

IMPROMPTU.

'"Since Drury's corps disown my sway,
And Stafford's cobblers hoot away,
Betwixt *St. Stephen's* and the *Bench*
I must retire, or must retrench."
"Dear Sherry, by that ruby nose,
That like my darling bev'rage glows,"
The Regent cries, "dismiss your fears ;
Cheer up, my lad, and dry your tears ;
Do what you will, you can't be beat !
In either case, *you'll have a seat.*" '

tions we have been recording. This incident, long debated and contested, was for a time obscure; but it has at last been cleared up. It seems that when he returned from his defeat at Stafford, he visited the Regent, and laid his failure on Whitbread. 'He came to me,' said the Regent, telling the story to Mr. Croker, 'to explain his failure, speaking with perfect fury of Whitbread, whom he called a *scoundrel*. He said he was building a scheme of ambition on the Princess, and that he was afraid of Sheridan on that point, and had determined to keep him out of Parliament.' The Prince, it appears, was touched by his forlorn state, and offered to find him a seat in Parliament. This kind proposal he put aside, Mr. Moore tells us, for the chivalrous reason that 'the thought of returning to the scene of his triumphs and his freedom with the royal owner's mark, as it were, upon him, *was more than he could bear*.' 'When we consider the public humiliations to which he would have been exposed, between his ancient pledge to Whiggism and his attachment and gratitude to royalty, it is not wonderful that he should have preferred even the alternative of arrest and imprisonment to the risk of bringing upon his political name any further tarnish in such a struggle.' It must be said, however, that in all his relations with the Prince, he had nourished this idea of independence, basing his devotion on a sort of romantic affection. He certainly

always insisted on this view of his services; and even in his letter to the electors of Westminster, ostentatiously takes credit for it. For practical purposes it was, however, one of his many delusions; and we have no better testimony than that of Mr. Moore himself, who has just put forward for him this chivalrous view. He seems even to sneer at the notion.

No more singular contrast could be conceived between his official statement and that given in the 'Diary.' Sheridan had told Lord Holland that '"he had no idea of risking the high independence of character which he had always sustained, by putting it in the power of any man, by any possibility whatever, to dictate to him." Yet, in the very same conversation,' says Moore, 'in *which he paraded all this fine flourish of high-mindedness, he told Lord H. of an intrigue he had set on foot for inducing the Prince to lend him* £4,000 *to purchase a borough!* From his habit of regarding money as nothing, he considered his *owing* the Prince £4,000 as no slavery.'*

* Moore little dreamed that an injudicious editor would allow these entries to stand. The same record further reveals to us his embarrassment in the composition of the work, and his not allowing anything to escape which should be distasteful to his Whig friends. He actually seemed to take instructions from them. Thus when treating of an incident in the Coalition, he spoke to a Whig ally of his 'delicacy on the subject of the Coalition; unwilling as I should be to offend Lord Holland, yet still feeling

It was long rumoured that the Regent had given Sheridan a large sum, £4,000, to buy a seat; and that instead of employing the money for this purpose, he had spent it in other ways. He declared that it had been given him to do what he pleased with. It seems highly improbable that the Prince would have given him so handsome a present without conditions; and it was natural that he should like to have the aid of so useful a supporter. It seemed improbable that the Regent, always 'impecunious,' could have commanded such a sum. The enemies of the Regent laughed at the idea. However, in one of his later editions, Mr. Moore had to admit that the story of the Prince's generosity was well

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it my duty to speak sincerely what I thought of Fox's conduct in that instance. He said there was much to be advanced in palliation, if not in vindication, of that and other coalitions: bade me talk on the subject to Lord Holland and Allen, who had staggered him by their arguments.' Moore was, however, encouraged in a straightforward course by Mackintosh, 'who seemed yesterday to think that I must hold a veil up before Sheridan's criminalities, but told me this morning he had been thinking of the subject the greater part of the night, and had come to the decision that I ought to do no such thing: it would be unjust to my own character and to the world; and that I ought (as, he owned, I seemed well inclined to do) to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth.' This sensible resolve he seems to have abandoned. At times during the progress of the work he confesses to being utterly sick of it, and to having no materials. Though he never quotes or makes allusion to Dr. Watkins, a preceding and industrious biographer, in his 'Diary' he makes this amusing confession: '*Reduced to Watkins.*'

founded. 'I have been furnished,' he says in his fifth edition, 'with some information on the subject of the royal gift to Sheridan, which, though I am unable to verify it by any documentary evidence, comes from a quarter in which I am disposed to place considerable confidence. By the account thus communicated to me, both my own original impression and the statement opposed to it are, in some degree, reconciled; as it appears that though the Royal Personage did actually bestow the gift, yet, through the fault of the agent to whom the money was entrusted, Sheridan never received it. The sum in question (£3,000 or £4,000, my informant is uncertain which) was, it seems, transmitted for the purpose of purchasing a seat for Sheridan, through the hands of the late Lord Hastings, and was by him entrusted to Mr. Cockrell (Cocker), an attorney, who professed to have the means of effecting the object desired. When Sheridan, as I have stated, declined accepting a seat on such terms, the Prince generously ordered that the money intended for the purchase should be given to him; but the person to whom it was confided, having (says my authority) "under unwarrantable pretences detained it in his hands, the benevolent intentions of the royal donor were frustrated. There is said to be a letter from the nobleman employed in the transaction, which would prove the circumstances as I have stated them." This document could not be procured.'

But in the recently published 'Croker Papers' we are presented with a full and characteristic account of the transaction, furnished by the Regent himself. Invited in the November of 1825 to stay at Windsor, Mr. Croker one afternoon found his Majesty with Moore's biography open before him. He seemed to be deeply hurt at the treatment he received from his former *protégé;* and it must be said that there was something singularly unworthy in the long series of bitter lampoons with which the poet repaid the generous patronage of the Prince. For many hours the King expatiated on the topic, and though he was well known for a strange and even laughable exaggeration when giving his reminiscences, it will be seen that his narrative is coherent enough, and in most portions truthful. It seems that when Lord Moira was setting out for India, he came to the Prince and said it was a pity that 'poor Sheridan' should be out of Parliament at the close of his life. The Duke of Norfolk had a seat which he would let Sheridan have for £3,000 instead of £4,000; but he would expect him to vote with him. On this the Regent said he would find some way to get the money. The affair, however, came to nothing. Later, Sheridan came and said he had found a young gentleman (Mr. Attersoll, who had bought a seat with the right of vacating it for another), and that he had settled with him for £3,000. Lord Moira had £3,000 of MacMahon's in his hands as trustee,

and it was agreed that the Prince and Lord Moira should guarantee the repayment to MacMahon. All this was kind and considerate. 'Not that we advanced the money to Sheridan himself,' went on the King—'we knew him too well for that; but the money was lodged in the hands of Mr. Cocker, a respectable solicitor named by Sheridan, who was to pay it over to the young man when the transfer was made. Sheridan took a world of trouble to convince MacMahon that all this transaction was *bonâ fide*.' The day before he was to go down, he called and took leave of MacMahon. Late that evening he wrote to say that he had forgotten to tell him something, and would come to breakfast next morning at eight. To MacMahon's surprise he arrived at that early hour. This was to urge the lodging the money with Cocker. He then hurried off, saying that his carriage was waiting. MacMahon followed, and saw a travelling carriage at the door, and Sheridan's trunks being put up. He then describes Sheridan's 'fidgety' state; but the gentleman did not arrive, and MacMahon came away with some suspicion on his mind. However, it was assumed that Sheridan had gone down to the election, and they were all expecting accounts of his reception at the borough. The King, in his own emphatic way, recounts what followed:

'Three days after I was on horseback in the Oxford Road, and I thought I saw Sheridan at a

distance. The person, whoever he was, turned into a by-street as if to avoid me. When I came home I sent for MacMahon, and asked him if he had heard of Sheridan. "No," said MacMahon, "not since I saw him off;" for he had seen him so nearly off that he looked on it as the same thing. "Damme," I said, "if I believe he is gone!" He then told MacMahon what he had seen. MacMahon was thunderstruck. He found Sheridan, who had never gone—the young gentleman had disappeared—there was a mistake about a letter; but all these *mal-entendus* were now rectified, and they were to set out next day. But next day came a note from Sheridan: "Sorry to say that negotiations had failed; but he had the pleasure to assure us that a more satisfactory arrangement was now on foot." Much alarmed, MacMahon wrote to Cocker, the solicitor, to demand the return of the money, as the negotiation was at an end. Cocker wrote back to say that this question of a seat in Parliament was quite new to him; that Mr. Sheridan never hinted at such a thing; that he had disposed of it, according to Sheridan's order, to pay certain pressing debts, and particularly a debt to himself, which he was obliged to press Sheridan for!

'The pretended explanation to MacMahon was more disrespectful and offensive to me than the original transaction, for he had before told me *why* Whitbread wished to keep him out, namely, lest he should serve me in the object nearest my heart, and

yet he had suffered Whitbread to bribe him out of my service with his own money, and had thus swindled me out of mine. I was obliged,' went on his Majesty, 'to repay this money, but I never saw Sheridan to speak to after; not that it was worse in principle than other things of his, nor that I had given orders to exclude him: but it was felt by Sheridan himself to be so gross a violation of confidence, such a want of respect, and such a series of lies and frauds, that he never came near me again. Later, however, he came to MacMahon, and tried to lay all the blame on that "scoundrel Whitbread." "In short," said Sheridan, throwing off that air of shame and contrition with which he began the conversation, and taking up a kind of theatrical tone and manner, "it was like the scene of Peachum and Lockit. I told him that I didn't want his assistance or his £2,000 now, as I had got £3,000 without any obligation to him, and should be in Parliament next week." Whitbread said he would give him the money to keep him out of Parliament, that is, if he agreed not to stand. "In short, he paid me the money on this condition; and when I came to ask for the £3,000 which you, my dear friend, had advanced, I found that that fellow Cocker had applied it to his own debt." After that Sheridan never came near either of us. I sometimes, however, heard of him. He now began to live in a very low, obscure way, and all he looked for in the

company he kept was brandy-and-water. He lived a good deal with some low people,' etc.

Such was this vivacious sketch, done, no doubt, in the exuberant and rambling style which was peculiarly the King's own. As a matter of course, the Regent had no such sum of money to advance, but he got his friends to do so. Neither Lord Moira nor MacMahon (the former a deeply embarrassed man) could afford to lose such a sum of money; and he, of course, had to repay it. It is likely enough that either by connivance of Sheridan, or by the designs of the attorney himself, a large portion of the money was detained to satisfy debts. Money-lending solicitors are likely to lay an embargo on any such waifs and strays as come to their debtors.*

The imagination, however, of his Majesty, as he recalled these incidents of many years, began to grow riotous, and reached the level of his famous charge at Waterloo, when he said, 'I don't like mentioning such things, but I must now tell you in confidence that all through our intercourse I had aided Sheridan to an enormous amount. I can *venture to say he has had above £*20,000 *from me ! !* I gave £1,000 to him the day before he failed.'

But with regard to the election-money, the

* The accuracy of the King's memory, after so long an interval, may be tested by his recollection of the names of subordinate persons. He even recalled that of the solicitor, which was Cocker, not Cockrell, or Coker, as Moore has it.

King's account is corroborated from other sources. A writer in one of the early numbers of the *Westminster*, who seems to speak from authority, tells us that the negotiation was opened with a Mr. Attersol, for a seat, Wooton Bassett. It was all but concluded, and nothing was wanted but Sheridan's presence on the spot. 'On three successive evenings Mr. Cocker dined with Sheridan at an hotel in Albemarle Street, a chaise on each night waiting at the door to carry them down; on each night Sheridan, after his wine, postponed the journey till the next day. On the fourth day he altogether abandoned the project of purchasing a seat, received £4,000, and applied them, as *he was warranted to do*, to his private uses.

This affectation of setting off, it will be seen, is common to both accounts, and looks like an attempt at deception.

Almost to within a year of his death, Sheridan had some faint hope that he might still be restored to the scene of his former 'glories.' When Lord Cochrane was expelled the House in 1814, poor Sheridan fancied that there was a desire expressed by some that he should take his place for Westminster. This faint pressure he resisted in a letter, which must have caused a smile, with perhaps the pitying remark, 'Poor old Sherry!'

*To Arthur Morris, High Bailiff of Westminster.*

'Savile Row, Sunday Evening, July 10, 1814.

'SIR,—Observing that you have called a meeting to-morrow, to be held in Palace Yard, to consider of a fit person to fill up the present vacancy in the representation of the City of Westminster, and having myself received very earnest applications from a most numerous and independent body of its inhabitant householders, that I should meet their wishes by proposing myself as a candidate, I take the freedom of addressing these lines to you to say that I absolutely decline to be put in nomination in opposition to Lord Cochrane. I send you this, my determination, without concert or communication with the respectable persons to whom I have above referred, and towards whom I must ever continue to owe the utmost gratitude. I trust I need not declare I should have felt greatly honoured by being their Member. My title to that distinction is simply that after more than thirty-one years' service in Parliament, I can, without fear of successful contradiction, assert that I never gave a vote that was not in support of the truth of liberty, and in assertion of the people's rights; duly respecting at the same time the just prerogative of the Crown, and revering the sacred principles upon which are founded and maintained the glory and security of our unrivalled Constitution. Holding these opinions, as a public man, have I

hitherto sat in the House of Commons; and never will I accept a seat there but on the sole condition of being the master of my own vote and voice—the servant only of my conscience. As to the present question which occasions your meeting to-morrow, I enter not into it. No man feels more the reverence due to seats of justice, or the confidence due to verdicts of juries. But under the circumstances of an expulsion from the House, I do not hesitate to say that I have a decided opinion that the expelled Member has a right to appeal to his constituents, with a view to the restitution of his seat and rescue of his character. On these grounds, sir, I will not allow myself to interfere with the present appeal made on the part of Lord Cochrane, and to which I conceive him to be so justly entitled.'

# CHAPTER IX.

## DOWNWARDS.

This disastrous failure leads on to the closing scenes of a fitful and once brilliant life, which were to usher in for the hapless Sheridan a final season of humiliation. There is nothing so painful in the whole round of political catastrophes as his situation at this time. Besides his general decay, the growth of intemperance was revealed in his personal appearance. Habitual carelessness and even lethargy—an impossibility of rousing him to any exertion—were noted by his friends. All this led to a complete loss of respect, and his general character and habits were pitilessly exposed in the papers. Thus we find Cobbett writing of him about this time, in what seem no exaggerated terms:

'His attendance in Parliament became every year more languid—the *vis inertiæ* incurable—the plunges by which his genius had now and then extricated him in former times less frequent and more feeble. We never witnessed a contrast more melancholy than between the brilliant and commanding talent

displayed by him through the first Regency discussions, and the low scale of nerve, activity, and capacity to which he seemed reduced when the question recently agitated Parliament.

'The economy of time was as much disregarded as that of money. All the arrangements, punctualities, and minor obligations of life were forgotten; and the *household of Mr. Sheridan was always in a state of nature.* His domestic feelings were originally kind and his manner gentle; but the same bad habits seduced him from the House of Commons and from home. Pecuniary difficulties often lead men to shifts and expedients: these were succeeded by others of less doubtful colour. Blunted sensibility, renewed excesses, loss of caste in society, follow each other in succession.'

In the *Examiner* one of the Hunts assailed him yet more bitterly, dwelling contemptuously on his oratorical flourishings, his high-flown declarations of principle; nor can it be denied that there was some truth in the following:

'If he persuades himself that the mere expression of his goodwill is of the least service to any person or thing upon earth, he is under a delusion. Nothing good is benefited by cant or professions: the only real proof of regard is in active assistance.

'One cannot contemplate with patience the sottish, the dependent, and discreditable old age of one who might at this minute have been the first man in

the nation. Such a man is his own scourge, and a dreadful one too; for really, if we were to cast about in our minds what punishment of all others we would inflict upon an idle and sensual spirit, we could find nothing worse than the life it chooses for itself—a life of shifts and continual fevers.

'When any side-blow is struck at the press, Mr. Sheridan is ready, no doubt, with his epigram or round period; but when the question comes to a point of action—though he boasts of his independence to the last—in point of fact he has acted the part of a dependent, and in no one instance ventured to give a vote in opposition to the Court feeling.'

The writer is then very sarcastic on Sheridan's habit of appealing to the Omniscient Searcher of hearts—his 'praying God to repair for the Prince what he had lost.' 'They had often seen him likened to his own Charles Surface; but were surprised to find him uniting with it the moral gravity of Joseph. But a habit of drinking often begets a habit of preaching to make up for not performing, and such will often deceive himself into the notion that he is a very worthy person, and attribute his bad habits to a vague sort of destiny that besets him, and renders him more to be pitied than blamed.

'As to his hysterical devotion to the Prince, which he claims never to have supported by "syco-

phancy"—are there not, however, little flattering appeals made over the bottle, which have all the effect of sycophancy? Will he contend that he never used such phrases as, "Good soul!" "Glorious fellow!" "The best heart existing!" "The best fellow in the world!" which are as good as the most studied adulations with people of a particular cast of mind?' Here, of course, the hatred of the *Examiner* for the Regent helped to colour this attack on his follower.

Money, theatre, Parliament, protection from arrest, all being lost, it was wonderful to see him, in the last three years of his life, still resorting to shifts and devices. Resources of some kind he managed to scrape together; and, above all, the great aim of such unworthy efforts was to secure breathing-time. This, indeed, through life was his chief weapon of defence against the lawful creditor, whom he would baffle again and again, until, grown weary, he gave up the pursuit in disgust. This is illustrated by a story which Lord Byron used to relate, of his meeting Sheridan, towards the close of the latter's life, at a lawyer's in Chancery Lane. 'Asking what Sheridan's business was, "Oh!" said the attorney, "the usual thing; to stave off an action of his wine-merchant, our client." "Well," said I, "and what do you mean to do?" "Nothing at all for the present," said the attorney. "Would you have us proceed against Old Sherry?" "What would be

the use of it?" And here he began laughing, and going over Sheridan's good gifts of conversation. Such was Sheridan, he could soften an attorney! And this was a particularly "hard-headed" one.'

But this indulgence could not continue. The resources offered by Sheridan's social gifts had begun to fail him. Creditors showed neither respect nor mercy for him. Nor was he indeed entitled to claim such; for it must be said, no one could have shown more heartless disregard for the sufferings of the humble creditors who were literally dependent on receiving what he owed them. In the sprightly 'Records of a Girlhood,' written by the much-admired Fanny Kemble, she relates how she heard from her mother, Mrs. Charles Kemble, of a significant scene often rehearsed at Drury Lane Theatre. Mrs. Kemble would describe 'the dismal Saturdays when, after prolonged periods of non-payment of their salaries, the poorer members of the company and all the unfortunate workpeople—carpenters, painters, scene-shifters, understrappers of all sorts, and *plebs* in general of the great dramatic concern—thronging the passages and staircases, would assail Sheridan on his way to the treasury with pitiful invocations: "For God's sake, Mr. Sheridan, pay us our salaries!" "For Heaven's sake, Mr. Sheridan, let us have something this week!" and his plausible reply, "Certainly, cer-

tainly, my good people; you shall be attended to directly!" Then he would go into the treasury, sweep it clean of the whole week's receipts (the salaries of the principal actors, whom he dared not offend, being, if not wholly, partially paid), and going out of the building another way, leave the poor people who had cried to him for their arrears of wages, baffled and cheated of the price of their labour for another week.'

This scene alone, representing as it does such suffering, selfish indifference, and deception, should ever be remembered when the Charles Surface theory of Sheridan's character is put forward. This was indeed but a portion of the ingenious method by which he contrived to protect himself from his natural enemies—creditors—and which he raised to the dignity of a perfect system; a system, too, in which '*des affaires*' seem defined as '*l'argent d'autrui*.' From the Old Drury Lane records and notes and papers of 'Dickey' Peake, we might almost reconstruct the system.*

* Thus, an order on the treasurer, already squeezed dry, would secure Sheridan a day or two's respite from a pressing claim, though their certain repudiation by the helpless official only infuriated the creditors more. On which Sheridan would affect indignation with his officer who had not honoured his draft, and write to the victim in this spirit. Copies of these documents are found among the papers of the treasurer, who played out the little comedy with the manager: 'I am truly sorry that Mr. Peake has not sent you the payment he promised me. You may rely on receiving £40

Another device of Sheridan's was, when pressed for some unpaid salary, yet still treated with forbearance, to announce in his gratitude that he would raise or double the performers' salaries. 'They would prefer,' said one of his friends gravely, 'to have the old salary paid regularly.' And Kelly mentions an instance of Welsh, a singing-boy, with whom Sheridan was so much pleased for his rendering of a song of Handel's, that he said 'he should be en-

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to-morrow, and £20 in each succeeding week until the whole is paid. I am sure you would not press me so if you were not pressed yourself, and I hope to hear to-night that this is satisfactory to you.' How far the debtor might 'rely' on these assurances may be gathered from a transaction with his solicitor—Cocker—who, in a desperate emergency, when there were no funds to pay the charges of the house, had advanced £240; Mr. Sheridan addressing a formal signed order to the treasurer to pay £20 over every night till the whole was discharged. Mr. Cocker seems to have obtained nothing, and we find him angrily writing 'for the third time' to the luckless treasurer, whose only course was to take no notice. Cocker could only declare that 'if good faith be not kept on this occasion, I shall certainly on any future application recollect the trouble and difficulty you gave me, and for which I required neither interest nor advantage.' 'Mr. Sheridan's compliments to Miss Hicks,' runs another letter, 'and he assures her that he did speak to Mr. Peake, and is much surprised that he has not sent her arrears. Mr. Sheridan thinks Miss Hicks is right not to go to the theatre till after he has appeared. She may receive her salary by her father, who may be assured he shall be paid in a few days.'

Elia, in one of his charming theatrical essays, states that the person who supplied lights to the theatre, 'one of the most gentlemanly of oil-men,' could never obtain any remuneration save occasional 'orders.'

couraged; go and tell him that, in addition to his salary, I shall send him a present of £200, and you shall take it to him.' Kelly, who knew Sheridan by this time, made a sarcastic answer, and adds, 'Neither I nor Welsh ever got a halfpenny of the money.' In natures like Sheridan's, a habit of generous flourishing comes, from practice, to *exclude* action, and promise is held to be performance. In one of Bishop's Butler's finest chapters of the 'Analogy,' the enfeebling effect on the soul of this passive habit, unsupported by action, is admirably analyzed. As sentiment destroys action, so, he shows, action destroys sentiment. Thus persons who weep over affecting novels, or pamper dogs, become indifferent to real suffering; while, on the other hand, army doctors, Sisters of Charity, and persons devoted professionally to good works and charity, soon get rid of all sentiment. The habitually self-indulgent man finds it impossible to think of others from this power of habit.

Among the few friends that did not fall away was Mr. Charles Butler, the well-known Catholic barrister and controversialist, who seems to have been very intimate with Sheridan in his later days, and who certainly viewed his failings with amiable indulgence. This excellent and religious man would be the most effective witness to character that poor Sheridan could call; for while recording his defects, he dwells on his general amiability, chiefly exhibited at con-

vivial seasons: though, it must be added, this feeling seems to have been founded on pity at the spectacle of so sad a ruin. On the death of Garrick's solicitor, Mr. Butler took his place as trustee for the theatre, a position which naturally brought him into very intimate connection with Sheridan. We find him thus pleading for his friend: 'Strange as it may appear, it nevertheless is true, that common-sense and dignity were possessed by Mr. Sheridan in the highest degree; but they were so counteracted by habitual procrastination and irregularity that he was scarcely known to possess them. He had very little information—had even little classical learning; but the powers of his mind were very great. He had a happy vein of ridicule; he could, however, rise to the serious and severe; and then his style of oratory was magnificent. But even in his happiest effusions, he had too much prettiness.' It need hardly be said that 'common-sense and dignity' of this description are practically worthless.

Another result of Mr. Butler's observation was that Sheridan seemed to him to be eager to be in some conspicuous position, and that the natural turn of his mind led him to court eminence as a monarch's favourite. The same longing made him cling to his position as manager of a theatre, where, at least, he could hold office. The sentimental cast of his mind, which really affected his conduct in a strong degree, was shown in the

confidence he often made to Mr. Butler, 'that he *was designed for poetry*.' His friend once read to him what he considered the finest specimen of his production in this direction, viz., his 'Epilogue to Semiramis,' which led to a curious outburst: 'Oh, why,' he exclaimed, 'did I not addict myself to poetry? for *that* I was designed!' 'But then,' the other answered, 'would you have been the admiration of the Senate? Would you have been received as doing honour to it at Devonshire House? Would you have been the friend of Mr. Fox?' 'What,' was the reply, 'has all this been to me? What am I the better for the admiration of the Senate, for Mr. Fox, for Devonshire House? I have thrown myself away. *But you shall see to-morrow!*' There is something almost pathetic in these last words, 'you shall see to-morrow!' No doubt it was a promise he had often whispered to himself.

At a dinner, where were Moore, Rogers, Byron, and Sheridan, the old spirits of the latter seemed to revive; and, after entertaining his friends with recollections of his youth and early struggles, he was specially merry on a competition prologue sent in by no less a person than Mr. Whitbread, the subject of which was the Phœnix, 'of which bird,' said Sheridan, 'he made more *than any of them*, describing its wings, beak, tail, etc.; in short, it was *a poulterer's* description of a Phœnix.' No wonder

Byron asked next day of his friend Moore, 'Was not Sheridan good last night?'

The theatre,* which was now complete and opened, was managed by a committee of lords and gentlemen, whose gifts for such duties may be measured by their odd proceeding of offering a premium for an opening prologue. To this, however, we owe that pleasant contribution to English wit, 'The Rejected Addresses.' This piquant effort, which never fails to win admiration for its easy, natural, and most diverting parodies, has also the merit of amusing even without a reference to what it satirizes. For unaffected buoyancy and absence of effort, it really stands alone. We read it in youth and in age with unabated delight, and if we do not bless the lively authors as we do Goldsmith, we ever think of the 'Brothers Smith' with pleasure and thankfulness.

It has been stated that the poor outcast late manager himself sent in a competition prologue, which shared the fate of the rest. On finding all offered to be of mediocre quality, a commission was given to Lord Byron to execute the work.

There was one little flickering up of the old fires. The engagement of Kean had rescued

* This and the later Lyceum are the only London theatres built on true architectural principles. The spacious and dignified approaches of Drury Lane Theatre, the noble stairs, the vestibules, rotunda, and splendid saloons, are all worthy of a temple of the drama, and intended to impress the spectator as he enters.

from ruin the committee of amateurs who were guiding the destinies of Drury Lane. The old manager naturally shrank from visiting the theatre, from the direction of which he had been uncere-moniously excluded; but a compliment in a pro-logue to Mr. Hobhouse's 'Provost of Bruges' had been cordially taken up by the audience, and he was at last induced to go and see Kean in 'Sir Giles.' He had dined with his friend Lord Essex. 'Once there,' says Mr. Moore, 'the *genius loci* seems to have regained its influence over him; for, on missing him from the box, between the acts, Lord Essex, who feared that he had left the house, hastened out to inquire, and, to his great satisfac-tion, found him installed in the green-room, with all the actors around him, welcoming him back to the old region of his glory, with a sort of filial cordiality. Wine was immediately ordered, and a bumper to the health of Mr. Sheridan was drunk by all present, with the expression of many a hearty wish that he would often, very often, re-appear among them.'*

He was also induced to go and see the new actress, Miss O'Neil, in his own Lady Teazle, a

* He had, however, previously asked Kean to come to his house to read 'Othello' to him and to Mrs. Sheridan, then ill. He told Kelly that he was much pleased, and said he had once studied the character to act at Sir Watkyn Wynne's private theatre, and that Kean's conception was exactly his own. A natural com-pliment, and no expression of vanity.

part she was not likely to have done justice to. His remark to Lord Byron on the performance was merely that 'he had never seen her out of starch and tinsel before.' He thus did not altogether abstain from the theatre to the romantic extent which has been represented.

It was at this time Sheridan made so strong an impression upon Lord Byron, his cordial and enthusiastic admirer. Byron describes his delight at meeting him in society: 'He was superb! He had a sort of liking for me, and never attacked me, at least to my face, as he did everybody else—high names and wits and orators, and some of the poets, too. I have seen him cut up Whitbread, quiz Madame de Stäel, annihilate Colman. I have seen him in all places and parties, at the Hollands', the Tavistocks', at Robins the auctioneer's, at Sam Rogers', and in most kinds of company, and have always found him convivial and delightful.' This is high praise; but he had the poet's sympathy.

Not less true and generous was the encomium, before referred to, made on Sheridan by the poet. 'The other night,' he writes, 'we were all delivering our respective and various opinions on him and other *hommes marquants*, and mine was this: "Whatever Sheridan has done or chosen to do has been *par excellence*, always the *best* of its kind. He has written the *best* comedy ('School for Scandal'), the *best* opera ('The Duenna'—in my mind far before

that St. Giles's lampoon, 'The Beggar's Opera'), the *best* farce ('The Critic'—it is only too good for an after-piece), and the *best* address ('Monologue on Garrick'); and, to crown all, delivered the very *best* oration (the famous Begum speech) ever conceived or heard in this country." Somebody told Sheridan this the next day, and, on hearing it, he burst into tears! Poor Brinsley! If they were tears of pleasure, I would rather have said those few, but sincere, words, than have written the 'Iliad,' or made his own celebrated philippic.'

There is a generous and cordial ring about these words, and it is no wonder that its subject was moved by them. It was remarked, however, by Horner and others, that Sheridan was eager to leave a favourable impression on new acquaintances.

To Byron also we are indebted for one of the best anecdotes of Sheridan. A watchman found him in the street fuddled and bewildered and almost insensible. '"Who are you, sir?" No answer. "What's your name?" Hiccups. "What's your name?" Answer, in a slow, deliberate, and impressive tone, "Wilberforce." Is not that Sherry all over? and, to my mind, excellent.'

As for older friends, Haydon the painter was told by some one, probably Sir G. Beaumont, that Sheridan had tired his great friends to death. At their country-seats he became latterly a wearisome

bore, drinking claret till midnight, and then rum-punch until five in the morning, ringing up the servants by night, and disturbing all the comfort of the house. For this reason it is not surprising to find that he was barely tolerated at the great houses. He was found, indeed, at the *menagerie* gathering at Holland House, meeting with Grattan, Kean, and other 'lions' whom the rather eccentric hostess loved to assemble there. Here his old humour flashed out, as when Kean related that at one time it had been proposed to bring him forward as 'a prodigy,' and run him against the young Betty: 'There must be only one bubble at a time; if there be two, they break against each other and burst.' Here the late Lord Broughton met him, and in his pleasant unpublished recollections has recorded a few traits. From one friend Sheridan received a useful mark of affection: Lord Kinnaird built in his park 'a very elegant cottage' expressly for his use.

Lady Holland, however, told Mr. Moore of a proceeding which could not have been acceptable. 'Sheridan used to take a bottle of wine and a book up to bed with him always; the *former* alone intended for use. In the morning he breakfasted in bed, and had a little rum or brandy with his tea or coffee; made his appearance between one and two, and pretending important business, set out for town, but regularly stopped at the "Adam and Eve" public-house for a dram. There was, indeed, a long bill

run up by him at the "Adam and Eve," which Lord Holland had to pay. I wonder if all these stories are true. The last is certainly but too probable.'

This taste for convivial pleasures often led him to sacrifice even his own most essential interests. Once there was a question connected with his theatre which he wished to lay before the King, and the Prince, who was going there himself, good-naturedly offered to take him down in his carriage. It was appointed that he should be at Carlton House at eleven o'clock. Kelly describes Mr. Sheridan coming to him, and saying, '"My dear Mic, I am going to Windsor with the Prince the day after to-morrow; I must be with him at eleven o'clock in the morning, to a moment. And to be in readiness at that early hour, you must give me a bed at your house; I shall then only have to cross the way to Carlton House."

'I had no bed to offer him but my own; and he, with his brother-in-law, Charles Ward, came to dinner with me. Amongst other things at table, there was a roast neck of mutton, which was sent away untouched. As the servant was taking it out of the room, I observed, "There goes a dinner fit for a king." The next morning I went out of town, to dine and sleep, purposely to accommodate Mr. Sheridan with my bed; and got home again about four o'clock in the afternoon, when I was told by my servant that Mr. Sheridan was upstairs still fast

asleep—that he had been sent for several times, from Carlton House, but nothing could prevail upon him to get up.

'It appears that, in about an hour after I had quitted town, he told my servant-maid that "he knew she had a dinner fit for a king in the house, a cold roast neck of mutton," and asked her if she had any wine? She told him there were, in a closet, five bottles of port, two of madeira, and one of brandy, the whole of which I found that he, Richardson, and Charles Ward, after eating the neck of mutton for dinner, had consumed. He was not able to raise his head from his pillow, nor did he get out of bed until seven o'clock, when he had some dinner.'

No wonder that even his warm and indulgent friend Mr. Butler had, at last, to give testimony against him, declaring that from the time of Fox's death 'he appeared a faded man,' and that in all places and in all hours he was too soon and too completely overpowered by wine. He was, alas! now sinking lower and yet lower, *sans* money, *sans* credit, *sans* friends, without hope of extrication from his straits. All that was left to him was his old humour, which occasionally flashed up even in his cups. As Lord Byron has said, even in his drunkenness his sallies were better than other men's sober flights. There is something genuinely ludicrous in his treatment of a Mr. Sheldon, of Weston,

in Warwickshire, who with him was supping with Mr. C. Butler. 'Mr. Sheldon was born of Catholic parents, and brought up a Catholic; he embraced the Protestant religion, and sat in two Parliaments. The Catholic question being mentioned, Mr. Sheridan, supposing Mr. Sheldon to be a Catholic, told him he was quite disgusted at the pitiful, lowly manner in which the Catholics brought forward their case: "Why should not you, Mr. Sheldon, walk into our House, and say, 'Here am I, Sheldon, of Weston, entitled by birth and fortune to be among you; but, because I am a Catholic, you shut the door against me.'" "I beg your pardon," said Mr. Sheldon, interrupting him, "I thought it the duty of a subject to be of the religion of his country; and therefore——" "You quitted," said Sheridan, interrupting him, "the errors of popery, and became a member of a Church which you know to be free from error? I am glad of it. You do us great honour." The subject then changed; but it was evident that Mr. Sheldon did not sit quite easy. It grew late; Mr. Sheldon took his watch from his pocket, and holding it forth to Mr. Sheridan, "See," he said to him, "what the hour is; you know our host is a very early riser." "D—n your *apostate watch!*" exclaimed Sheridan; "put it into your Protestant fob." Mr. Charles Butler often heard him assert, with evident satisfaction, that in all his writings, and even in his freest moments, a

single irreligious opinion or word had never escaped him.'

It must have been at this time that the curious scene occurred at a party at Robins the auctioneer's, where Byron and many great persons were guests, and Sheridan wept. Praise had been given to the two lords and the Whigs for their sturdiness in keeping to their principles, when Sheridan broke out, 'Sir, it is easy for Lord Grenville, or Earl Grey, or Lord Holland, with thousands upon thousands a year, some of it either presently derived or inherited or sinecure, to boast of their patriotism, and keep aloof from temptation; but they do not know from what temptation those have kept who had equal pride, or at least equal talents and not unequal passions, and nevertheless knew not in the course of their lives what it was to have a shilling of their own.' And on saying this he wept! A strange scene, though most of those present must have been accustomed to the outbursts of 'poor Sherry.'

This, in truth, is the plea that has been too often put forward for his failings—a curious instance, too, of complacent indulgence for the delusion that principle and good behaviour are dependent on easy circumstances. Sheridan forgot that there were other forms of temptation which the noble persons alluded to could resist. Not a shilling he could call his own! 'To be sure,' adds Lord Byron, who relates the incident, 'he contrived to extract a good

many shillings of other people's.' The truth being, that with ordinary restraints he might have enjoyed a very handsome income all his life. But his ruling principle was embodied in a direction found in a letter to his treasurer: '*Borrow, and fear not!*'*

Indeed, Sheridan's innumerable acquaintances could all contribute stories of their brilliant companion, and testimonies of their admiration; but it is amusing to find that these, told with much enjoyment, were of the same pattern, and illustrated but one phase of his gifts—some ingenious *tour de force* in the way either of obtaining money or 'bamboozling' somebody.† Mr. Creevy, a mediocre but useful politician, who knew all the secrets of the party, recollected a scene at the Brighton Pavilion in 1805, which must have been of singular interest. This was the meeting of Mr. Warren Hastings with his old antagonist

* In the course of this compilation I have often tried to discover what Sheridan's income really was, with varying success. But I recently came upon a fragment of an account among Peake's papers, which supplies some information. By this paper he claimed to draw a salary as manager of £5 a night, or nearly £1,600 a year. His property in the private boxes he valued, at the least, at £500. There were 'receipts for rent' amounting to about £300 a year. According to this account, his share of the fortieth night of 'Pizarro' brought him £100, at which scale he would have received £4,000 for the year. This was surely a respectable sum, and he seems to claim that as much more is owing to him.

† Mr. Moore systematically applied to every notable politician who had known Sheridan, and the contributions of these gentlemen were invariably of the pattern described.

and denunciator Sheridan. They were presented to each other by their host, the Prince of Wales. We could fancy with what a curious spirit Burke or Fox would have met the shattered old veteran. Sheridan's compliment was, 'You are too much a man of the world, Mr. Hastings, not to feel that all I did on that occasion was *merely in the spirit of politics*,' and so on. This was no doubt true, and Mr. Hastings, much gratified at the confession, declared that it would be an infinite gratification to him to have these sentiments made known to the world. Sheridan, who did not expect his flourish to be taken *au sérieux*, 'backed out' as well as he could, no doubt leaving with the other but a poor estimate of his sincerity.

The same authority, however, gives him this credit, that he rarely borrowed money—that is, from friends in his own rank; and Mr. Whitbread confirmed this view. True, he borrowed their houses and other property freely. Many a table was set on a roar by the recital of some ingenious trick devised for this end. Mr. Peter Moore used to relate 'the art,' as he called it, with which Sheridan got possession of his friend Ironmonger's house at Leatherhead, by advising him to go to the Continent; *he* would take the house and furniture off his hands for five years. The owner, however, had to return unexpectedly, owing to the proscription of the English by Bonaparte, and had the greatest difficulty in

getting back his property. Sheridan habitually preferred to make himself the tenant of some friend. The house in Savile Row, in which he died, was lent to him by Lord Mornington. Polesden, which he had almost secured without payment, fell into complete ruin, but passed into the possession of his son Charles.

A habit of his, already referred to, was that of stuffing his accumulated letters, opened and unopened, into a bag, and carrying it down with him to the country or to some retired spot, where he meant to examine them at his leisure. Such a bag he would take out with him to a coffee-house. His solicitor, Burgess, used to relate how one day he made an unlucky mistake, taking with him by mistake a bag of old love-letters instead of the one he intended. Getting drunk, he left them behind, and they fell into the hands of a person who refused to give them up unless on payment of £100. It was then that the *ruse*—no doubt the offspring of Sheridan's ingenious fancy—of sending some pretended police-officers to seize them, was carried out successfully.*

There was not wanting an occasional surprise of an agreeable kind, such as that visit to Cox's bank to ask leave to overdraw for £10, when, to his amazement and delight, the clerk suggested larger and larger sums, until he found that a windfall of £1,200,

* This Burgess, as 'one who knew,' assured Mr. Moore that Sheridan had paid 150 per cent. on his debts.

a fine for renewing a lease, had been paid to him as receiver of the Cornwall estates. Mr. Moore tells this pleasant story, but does not add the sequel related to him by Mr. Creevy. It was found that Sheridan had not received the letter of notice from the bank, and the narrator added this little touch in explanation as though it were a matter of course : 'His letters were often refused to be taken in at his house, owing to there being no money to pay the postage.' On the strength of this unexpected discovery, Sheridan took a house in Barnes, and within a very short time had spent the whole sum.*

It is lamentable that even within a few months of his death, with disease gaining fast upon him, he was still found indulging in fatal excesses. In the October of 1815 we find him dining with Lord Byron at a largish party, composed of Harris of Covent Garden, Mr. Douglas Kinnaird, Colman, and others 'of note and notoriety.' 'Like other parties of the kind,' says Lord Byron humorously, 'it was first silent, then talky, then argumentative, then disputative, then unintelligible, then altogether inarticulate, then drunk.' He and Mr. Kinnaird had to conduct Sheridan 'down a dark corkscrew

* It is not very clear how he could have been allowed control over this sum, which would seem properly a portion of the profits accruing to the Prince from the Cornwall Duchy. But, according to the anecdote, it must have been a part of his own emoluments.

stair, which had certainly been constructed before the discovery of fermented liquors.' They brought Sheridan home, and consigned him to his man, whom they found waiting in the hall, 'evidently used to the business.'

And now he was to experience the last stage of humiliation. Already nearly every article of interest or value—silver cups, pictures, books presented by friends, books borrowed, MS. plays—all had found their way to pawnbrokers.* This was sad enough, but now he was to suffer actual arrest. This he felt acutely, though, as an incident of pecuniary embarrassment, it was surprising that he had not encountered it before. In this year, however, his friend Lord Byron had no less than *nine* executions, and said that the bailiffs assured him that 'Mr. Sheridan always behaved to them like a gentleman.'

At this time he was living in No. 14, Savile Row, a house lent him by a friend; and a tablet

* The pawnbroker behaved with propriety. Mr. Moore tells us that, 'in most of them (the books), too, were the names of the givers. The delicacy with which Mr. Harrison, of Wardour Street (the pawnbroker with whom the books and the cup were deposited), behaved, after the death of Mr. Sheridan, deserves to be mentioned with praise. Instead of availing himself of the public feeling at that moment by submitting these precious relics to the competition of a sale, he privately communicated to the family and one or two friends of Sheridan the circumstance of his having such articles in his hands, and demanded nothing more than the sum regularly due on them.'

set up by the Society of Arts records the fact that he lived there.* When he was 'on his keeping' he did not venture to reside there, but used to live at Nerot's Hotel, 'chuckling,' we are told, at the bailiffs, who were patiently watching the house.

But these jocular precautions did not avail him, and he was at last arrested at his house in Savile Row, and taken away to a 'spunging-house' in Cursitor Street. Of his behaviour here Wraxall picked up the following details: 'A friend of mine, a young man, having been arrested for a debt, and carried to a "spunging-house," there found himself detained in a large apartment with Sheridan and Sir Watkin Lewes. The latter had been Lord Mayor of London, as well as one of the members for that city. They remained shut up together for three days. Sheridan was morose, taciturn, and gloomy before dinner—for they all ate and slept in the same room; but when he had drunk nearly two bottles of wine, as he regularly did, after dinner, he became comparatively cheerful and communicative. Sir Watkin, at near fourscore, exhibited equal good-humour and equanimity of mind.'

From this place of detention Sheridan sent to his friend Whitbread this painful appeal for aid:

* Cunningham and Jesse state that Sheridan died at No. 17, Savile Row.

'I have done everything in my power with the solicitors, White and Founes, to obtain my release, by substituting a better security for them than their detaining me—but in vain.

'Whitbread, putting all false professions of friendship and feeling out of the question, you have no right to keep me here!—for it is in truth *your* act: —if you had not forcibly withheld from me the *twelve thousand pounds*, in consequence of a threatening letter from a miserable swindler, whose claim YOU in particular knew *to be a lie*, I should at least have been out of the reach of *this* state of miserable insult—for that, and that only, lost me my seat in Parliament. And I assert that you cannot find a lawyer in the land, that is not either a natural-born fool or a corrupted scoundrel, who will not declare that your conduct in this respect was neither warrantable nor legal—but let that pass *for the present.*

'Independently of the £1,000 ignorantly withheld from me on the day of considering my last claim, I require of you to answer the draft I send herewith on the part of the Committee, pledging myself to prove to them on the first day I can *personally* meet them, that there are still thousands and thousands due to me, both legally and equitably, from the theatre. My word ought to be taken on this subject; and you may produce to them this document, if one among them could think that,

under all the circumstances, your conduct required a justification. O God! with what mad confidence have I trusted *your word*—I ask *justice* from you, and *no boon*. I enclosed you yesterday three different securities, which, had you been disposed to have acted even as a private friend, would have made it *certain* that you might have done so *without the smallest risk*. These you discreetly offered to put into the fire, when you found the object of your humane visit satisfied by seeing me safe in prison.

'I shall only add, that, I think, if I know myself, had our lots been reversed, and I had seen you in my situation, and had left Lady E. in that of my wife, I would have risked £600 rather than have left you so—although I had been in no way accessory in bringing you into that condition.'

Mr. Moore says that Sheridan's new abode formed a sad contrast to 'the princely halls of which he had so lately been the most brilliant and favoured guest, and *which were possibly at that moment* lighted up and crowded with gay company, unmindful of him within those prison walls.' Unluckily this sort of contrast or speculation is always possible and must ever be. Society never suspends its gaieties in sympathy for the misfortunes of one of its members. Whitbread sent or came to see him,

and, as was to be expected, procured his release after a short delay.*

There was a sad scene when he returned home to Savile Row to his unfortunate wife. 'All his fortitude forsook him, and he burst into a long and passionate flood of tears over the profanation which his person had suffered.'

His last illness was now upon him—a disease of the stomach and failure of the digestive organs, brought on by too great indulgence in drink. Mr. Moore adds that it was also owing to the 'harassing anxieties that had, for so many years, without intermission beset him. His powers of digestion grew every day worse, till he was at length unable to retain any sustenance. Notwithstanding this, however, his strength seemed to be but little broken, and his pulse remained, for some time, strong and regular. Had he taken, indeed, but ordinary care of himself through life, the robust conformation of his frame, and particularly, as I have heard his physician remark, the peculiar width and capaciousness of his chest, seemed to mark him out for a

* Mr. Croker claims the credit of the act for the Regent, who unsolicited, he says, instantaneously interposed. Whitbread, he adds, left his dinner-table, but before he could arrive at the prison Sheridan was free. All this fiction is disposed of by Sheridan's own letter.

Not long after these events this good friend, against whom he was so unreasonably prejudiced, died by his own hand—it was said from overwork.

long course of healthy existence. In general, Nature appears to have a prodigal delight in enclosing her costliest essences in the most frail and perishable vessels: but Sheridan was a signal exception to this remark; for, with a spirit so "finely touched," he combined all the robustness of the most uninspired clay.' His appearance has been thus described: 'In person he was of the middle size, of a robust constitution, well limbed, inclining a little to a stoop, and deep in the chest. His eyes were black, and of uncommon brilliancy and expression. Sir Joshua Reynolds has said that his pupil was the largest of any human eye he ever painted.'

This final attack was in March, 1816, and it confined him to his bed. He had hoped to attend the St. Patrick's Day dinner, and his letter of excuse was acknowledged by the Duke of Kent, who presided on the occasion, with cordial sympathy.*

* 'Kensington Palace, March 27, 1816.

'MY DEAR SHERIDAN,—I have been so hurried ever since St. Patrick's Day, as to be unable earlier to thank you for your kind letter, which I received while presiding at the festive board; but I can assure you, I was not unmindful of it *then*, but announced the afflicting cause of your absence to the company, who expressed, in a manner that could not be *misunderstood*, their continued affection for the writer of it. It now only remains for me to assure you that I appreciate as I ought the sentiments of attachment it contains for me, and which will ever be most cordially returned by him, who is with the most friendly regard, my dear Sheridan,

'Yours faithfully,

'EDWARD.'

# CHAPTER X.

## DEATH—1816.

We are now approaching the last scene of all, which was to close this troubled irregular life. Though the spendthrift's end usually follows an established form, and it may be almost predicted will be attended by misery and privation, we are scarcely prepared for the sad horrors that awaited the last hours of the gifted and once brilliant Sheridan. Such a crisis of woe would have seemed incredible and almost impossible on that glorious intoxicating day of triumph, when he was enthralling Westminster Hall with his eloquence; or when the walls of his great theatre were re-echoing to the shouts of applause that greeted the only successor of Congreve. There is a strange likeness to the appalling reverse that overtook the once fashionable Brummell, who was, after much misery, to die in a French mad-house, an object of charity.

'My dear Sir' (he wrote),—'At our dinner at Mr. Robins' you may recollect introducing me to a

friend and relation of yours, whose manners and conversation I had taken a fancy to. You may also recollect that we had some conversation on the subject of publishing all I had written,* when I promised to have further communication on the subject. With the exception of two or three days, I have been confined by illness ever since. I am now recovering fast, and eager to pursue any object. Could you favour me with a call between three and four to-morrow? Perhaps Mr. Longman would accompany you. I hope my old valued friend, your father, is well.

'R. B. S.'

'I am recovering fast' was but a simulated hope, as he was fast hurrying to the grave. Mrs. Sheridan was ill herself, and could with difficulty attend him.

It was now that one of those kindly skilful doctors —friend, rather than physician—appeared on the scene to alleviate his sufferings, and minister to his comfort. This was the Dr. Bain† who attended his

* This idea of collecting and publishing his works had often been before his mind, and several proposals had been made to him on the subject. He seems to have been always eager to contract for such an undertaking, but appears never to have mustered energy sufficient to enter on the work of revision. Thus, in the November of 1809, we find a draft agreement with a Mr. Raymond, by which he was to receive £400 on publication, with further sums of £100, contingent on sales.

† Mr. Taylor furnishes these particulars respecting Dr. Bain: 'He was a profound and elegant scholar, of which he gave ample proofs

first wife, and whom in his grief and gratitude Sheridan had presented with a sum of £100 for

in some Latin dissertations on medical subjects. The doctor had a son and two daughters. He was bred to the Church, and had a living at about the distance of a mile from his father's residence at Heffleton, in Dorsetshire. A more happy family never existed. The son was learned and affectionate, and the daughters highly amiable and accomplished. . . .

'Before Dr. Bain retired from his profession, and settled at his seat in Dorsetshire, he invited me to dine with him, for the purpose of introducing me to Mr. Charles Sheridan, the son of Mr. R. B. Sheridan, as one of the old friends of his father. Mr. Charles Sheridan inherits in a great degree the talents of his father. He has travelled into Greece, and has published a very intelligent tract upon the present situation of that country, and on the hopes, expectations, and prospects of the descendants of its ancient sages, heroes, and poets, whose history, real and fabulous, will always render them the delight of mankind.'

Mr. Fyler, Secretary of Brooks's Club, who is a grandson of this kind physician, has supplied me with some further interesting details. Mr. Fyler writes: 'My grandfather, Dr. Bain, was the son of a Highland gentleman, who was out with Prince Charlie in 1745. After the disastrous battle of Culloden, Mr. Bain was for several months in hiding, and went through many hairbreadth escapes. Eventually, however, he received the pardon of the Government on condition of paying a heavy fine. This compelled him to sell his small estate, and he spent the remainder of his life in Edinburgh, where his funeral was attended by the principal members of the Jacobite party in Scotland. His son adopted the medical profession, and, after practising for some years at Bath, went to London, where his abilities were at once recognised, and he speedily became one of the leading physicians of the day. In 1809 he was appointed physician extraordinary to the Prince of Wales.

'Dr. Bain married, in 1793, Elizabeth, daughter of John Rodbard, of West Coker, Somerset. She died in 1801. In

his services. To this amiable, thoughtful man he was indebted for much assistance in this last trial. Never was friendly aid more needed, for the sick man's state was in every way desperate.

'Writs and executions,' Mr. Moore tells us, 'came in rapid succession, and bailiffs at length gained possession of his house. It was about the beginning of May that Lord Holland, on being informed by Mr. Rogers (who was one of the very few that watched the going out of this great light with interest) of the dreary situation in which his old friend was lying, paid him a visit one evening, in company with Mr. Rogers, and by the cordiality, suavity, and cheerfulness of his conversation, shed a charm round that chamber of sickness, which, perhaps, no other voice but his own could have imparted.

'Such a visit, therefore, could not fail to be soothing and gratifying to Sheridan; and, on parting, both Lord Holland and Mr. Rogers comforted him

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1796 he purchased the estate of Heffleton, in Dorsetshire, where he planted so extensively, and with such good judgment, that in 1808 he was presented with a gold medal by the Society for Planting. In 1820 Dr. Bain received a severe blow, from which he never recovered, by the death of his only son, a promising young man of twenty-six, rector of the neighbouring parish of Winfrith, who was drowned with Mr. W. Baring, then residing at Lulworth Castle, by the oversetting of a boat at Arishmell Bay, close to the Castle. Mr. Baring's young wife and Mr. Bain's two sisters were on the beach at the time, and witnessed the dreadful occurrence.'

with the assurance that some steps should be taken to ward off the immediate evils that he dreaded.

'An evening or two after (Wednesday, May 15) Mr. Rogers, on returning home, found the following afflicting note upon his table:

'"Savile Row.

'"I find things settled, so that £150 will remove all difficulty. I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. I shall negotiate for the plays successfully in the course of a week, when all shall be returned. I have desired Fairbrother to get back the guarantee for thirty.

'"They are going to put the carpets out of window, and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take me* —for God's sake let me see you.

'"R. B. S."'

It was too late to do anything when this note was received, being then between twelve and one at night; but Mr. Rogers and Mr. Moore walked down to Savile Row together to assure themselves that the threatened arrest had not yet been put in execution. A servant spoke to them out of the area, and said that all was safe for the night; but that it was intended, in pursuance of this new proceeding, to paste bills over the front of the house next day.

On the following morning Moore was early with Rogers, and willingly undertook to be the bearer of a draft for £150 to Savile Row. He found Mr.

Sheridan good-natured and cordial as ever; and, though he was then within a few weeks of his death, his voice had not lost its fulness or strength, nor was that lustre for which his eyes were so remarkable diminished. He showed, too, his usual sanguineness of disposition in speaking of the price that he expected for his dramatic works, and of the certainty he felt of being able to arrange all his affairs, if his complaint would but suffer him to leave his bed.

'In the following month his powers began rapidly to fail him; his stomach was completely worn out, and could no longer bear any kind of sustenance. During the whole of this time, as far as I can learn,' says Mr. Moore, 'it does not appear that (with the exceptions I have mentioned) any one of his noble or royal friends ever called at his door, or even sent to inquire after him.'

It will be shown presently how unjust and wanton was this charge of desertion by 'royal and noble persons.' The truth was poor Sheridan had so withdrawn from society, and had become, as the French say, so *déclassé* that he seemed to have sunk out of sight, and little or nothing was known about his illness.

The worthy physican was now surprised at receiving a mysterious communication from Mr. Taylor Vaughan—well known in town as '*Hat* Vaughan,' just as certain of his friends were styled

*Dog* Dent, *Poodle* Byng, etc.—to the effect that a friend of his, hearing of his patient's destitute case, wished to contribute to his aid.

'My dear Sir' (he wrote to Dr. Bain),—'An apology in a case of humanity is scarcely necessary; besides, I have the honour of a slight acquaintance with you. A friend of mine, hearing of *our friend* Sheridan's forlorn situation, and that he has neither money nor credit for a few comforts, has employed me to convey a small sum for his use, through such channel as I think right. I can devise none better than through you. If I had had the good fortune to have seen you, I should have left for this purpose a draft for £50. Perhaps as much more might be had, if it will be conducive to a good end.'

He then asked the doctor to call on him. An interview followed, at which Mr. Vaughan stated that he had £200 to be placed at his command for the charitable purpose; and it later turned out, though he did not mention it then, that more would be forthcoming if required. Dr. Bain reported the offer to Mrs. Sheridan. That lady consulted her friends. We may conceive the effect of such a proposal. To accept such assistance would be a reproach on them. She accordingly declined it, and bade the doctor reply that she had enough to supply all his wants, and begged to decline the offer.

Who was this kindly friend? No other than the

much-maligned Regent, and the well-meant service is thus requited by one of 'the friends' of the family. It was known that it came from the Prince; the party, who had broken with him, would not allow such an obligation to be incurred. Mr. Moore's account of the matter displays a very unworthy party bitterness, and in his first edition he actually tries to turn what was a kindly act into an insult. It is in this way that he puts it: 'Mr. Vaughan always said that the donation thus *doled* out came from a royal hand; but this is hardly credible. It would be safer, perhaps, to let the suspicion rest upon that gentleman's memory, of having indulged his own benevolent disposition in this disguise, than to suppose it possible that so scanty and reluctant a benefaction was the sole mark of attention accorded by a "gracious Prince and Master" to the last death-bed wants of one of the most accomplished and faithful servants that royalty ever yet raised or ruined by its smiles. When the philosopher Anaxagoras lay dying for want of sustenance, his great pupil, Pericles, sent him a sum of money. "Take it back," said Anaxagoras—"if he wished to keep the lamp alive, he ought to have administered the oil before!"'

The truth was, the Regent had been a benefactor to the whole family. He had helped Tom Sheridan in his difficulties. He had given Sheridan a lucrative place, promised him the offer of another, pro-

cured him three or four thousand pounds a short time before; and, on hearing of his illness and distress, sent him this present relief!

'Where,' asks Mr. Moore, in burning words, 'were they all, those royal and noble persons, who had crowded to "partake the gale" of Sheridan's glory?—where were they all while any life remained in him?—where were they all but a few weeks before, when their interposition might have saved his heart from breaking?—or when zeal, now wasted on the grave, might have soothed and comforted his death-bed? This is a subject on which it is difficult to speak with *patience*.'

The truth was, as Mr. Croker argues, these persons could know nothing of the previous destitution. 'Sheridan—a self-immolated victim to his own lamentable and shameful weaknesses—had hidden himself from their society; and it was, as Lord Holland told Moore, a peculiarity of Sheridan's disposition, that he had all his life endeavoured to put a false face on his difficulties, and to conceal his private embarrassments and wants. He was still living—nominally at least—in his usual respectable residence in Savile Row; beyond that circumstance, everything about him had long been obscure. No one knew or suspected the extremities to which he was reduced; this Moore himself confesses.' As Moore had to admit in his later edition: 'As little could I have meant to doubt the readiness of the

Whig friends of Sheridan to assist him, while he made one of their circle, on any occasions when he may have required their aid; though, in justice to him, I must repeat that such appeals were far from frequent. The strong remarks which I hazarded, and which have produced—naturally enough, perhaps—so much irritation, apply solely to the last few months of Sheridan's life, and to the neglect with which he was left to die, in the hands of bailiffs, by those, of whose society he had been, through life, the light and ornament.'

Even his warm and partial friend, Mr. Charles Butler, felt himself constrained to give the same testimony; and the words of this conscientious and tolerant man should be marked: 'Reflections have been cast upon some friends of his for their alleged insensibility to his distresses. But his previous usage of them should be taken into account. None but those who witnessed it can conceive the repeated instances of unfeeling and contumelious regard which he showed them, by his total want of punctuality in his engagements, and his heedlessness of the inconveniences and loss which he occasioned them.'

The fact is, no sooner did the Regent hear of Sheridan's state of distress, than he sent an agent with relief. Here is the story as related by the King in his own inimitable style to Mr. Croker:

'The last time that I saw Sheridan was in the neighbourhood of Leatherhead, on the 17th August,

1815. I know the day from this circumstance, that I had gone to pay my brother a visit at Oatlands on his birthday; and next day, as I was crossing over to Brighton, I saw, in the road near Leatherhead, old Sheridan coming along the pathway. I see him now in the black stockings and blue coat with metal buttons. I said to Bloomfield, "There's Sheridan;" but, as I spoke, he turned off into a lane when we were within thirty yards of him, and walked off without looking behind him.

'That was the last time I ever saw Sheridan, nor did I hear of or from him for some months; but one morning MacMahon came up to my room, and after a little hesitation and apology for speaking to me about a person who had lately swindled me and him so shamelessly, he told me that Mr. Vaughan—*Hat* Vaughan they used to call him—had called to say that Sheridan was dangerously ill, and really in great distress and want. I think no one who ever knew me will doubt that I immediately said that his illness and want made me forget his faults, and that he must be taken care of; and that any money that was necessary I desired MacMahon should immediately advance. He asked me to name a sum, as a general order of that nature was not one on which he could venture to act; and whether *I* named, or *he* suggested, £500, I do not remember; but I do remember that the £500 was to be advanced at once to Mr. Vaughan, and that he was to be told that

when that was gone he should have more. I set no limit to the sum, nor did I say or hear a word about the mode in which it was to be applied, except only that I desired that it should not appear to come from me. I was induced to this reserve by several reasons. I thought that Sheridan's debts were, as the French say "*la mer à boire*," and unless I was prepared to drink the sea, I had better not be known to interfere, as I should only have brought more pressing embarrassments on him; but I will also confess that I did not know how really ill he was, and, after the gross fraud he had so lately practised upon me, I was not inclined to forgive and forget it so suddenly, and without any colour of apology or explanation—for a pretended explanation to MacMahon was more disrespectful and offensive to me than the original transaction: and, finally, there is not only bad taste but inconvenience in letting it be known what pecuniary favours a person in my situation confers, and I therefore, on a consideration of all these reasons, forbade my name being mentioned at present; but I repeated my directions that he should want for nothing that money could procure him.

'MacMahon went down to Mr. Vaughan, and told him what I had said, and that he had my directions to place £500 in his hands. Mr. Vaughan, with some expression of surprise, declared that no such sum was wanted at present, and it was not

without some pressing that he took £200, and said that if he found it insufficient he would return for more. He did come back, but not for more ; for he told MacMahon that he had spent only £130 or £140, and he gave the most appalling account of the misery which he had relieved with it. He said that he found him and Mrs. Sheridan both in their beds, both apparently dying, and both starving ! It is stated in Mr. Moore's book that Mrs. Sheridan attended her husband in his last illness ; it is not true. She was too ill to leave her own bed, and was in fact already suffering from the lingering disease of which she died in a couple of years after. They had hardly a servant left. Mrs. Sheridan's maid she was about to send away, but they could not collect a guinea or two to pay the woman's wages. When Mr. Vaughan entered the house, he found all the reception-rooms bare, and the whole house in a state . . . . that was quite intolerable. Sheridan himself he found in a truckle-bed in a garret, with a coarse blue and red coverlid, such as one sees used as horse-cloths, over him. Out of this bed he had not moved for a week . . . nor could Vaughan discover that anyone had taken any notice of him, except one lady, whose name I hardly know whether I am authorized to mention. Some ice and currant-water were sent from Holland House—an odd contribution, for if it was known that he wanted these little matters, which might have been had at the

confectioner's, it might have been suspected that he was in want of more essential things.

'Yet, notwithstanding all this misery, Sheridan on seeing Mr. Vaughan appeared to revive; he said he was quite well, talked of paying off all his debts, and, though he had not eaten a morsel for a week, he spoke with a certain degree of alacrity and hope. Mr. Vaughan, however, saw that this was a kind of bravado, and that he was in a fainting state, and he immediately procured him a little spiced wine and toast, which was the first thing (except brandy) that he had tasted for some days.

'Mr. Vaughan lost no time in next buying a bed and bed-clothes, half a dozen shirts, some basons, towels, etc. He had Sheridan taken up . . . and put into the new bed; he had the rooms cleaned and fumigated; he discharged, I believe, some immediately pressing demands; and, in short, provided, as well as circumstances would admit, for the care and comfort, not only of Sheridan, but of Mrs. Sheridan also.

'I sent the next day (it was not till next day that MacMahon repeated this melancholy history to me, for I myself did not see Mr. Vaughan) to inquire after Sheridan, and the answer was that he was better and more comfortable, and I had the satisfaction to think that he wanted nothing that money and the care and kindness of so judicious a friend as Mr. Vaughan could procure him; but the day follow-

ing—that is, two days after Mr. Vaughan had done all this, and actually expended near £150 as I have stated—he came to MacMahon with an air of mortification, and stated that he was come to return the £200. "The £200!" said MacMahon, with surprise; "why, you had spent three-fourths of it the day before yesterday!" "True," returned Vaughan, "but some of those who left these poor people in misery have now insisted on their returning this money, which they suspect has come from the Prince. Where they got the money I know not; but they have given me the amount with a message that *Mrs.* Sheridan's friends had taken care that Mr. Sheridan wanted for nothing. I," added Mr. Vaughan, "could only say that this assistance came rather late, for that three days ago I was enabled, by his Royal Highness's bounty, to relieve him and her from the lowest state of misery and debasement in which I had ever seen human beings."'

It must be said that the details of this narrative are confused or 'muddled,' especially as to the notion that the money had been laid out in bedding and comforts. The fact was that the King had inverted the order of events, a process that had become habitual with him in his later days, and which was indeed natural after so long an interval. The misery described no doubt had been the *cause* of Mr. Vaughan's offer to the

physician. Mrs. Sheridan called 'the friends' into council; the stimulant which was wanting to their charity was now supplied by party feeling. They were afraid that the generosity of the Prince would be a reproach to *them*, and accordingly persuaded Mrs. Sheridan to decline the proposal. We may assume that they felt bound to make up to the family what they thus deprived them of.

That the King's picture of the squalor and wretchedness of the household is not overcharged, is shown by the account of another witness who called to see the unhappy family in their distress—Mr. Smyth—and this is the story of what he saw: 'Nothing could be more deplorable than the look of everything wherever I turned my eyes. There were strange-looking people in the hall; the parlour seemed dismantled. A crumpled piece of paper on the table proved to be a prescription by Sir H. Halford.' Mrs. Sheridan offered him some refreshment, and on his declining, the unfortunate lady said piteously, 'You think that our poor house can furnish nothing. I do believe we can. Let us try,' and rang the bell.

Mr. Moore's treatment of this episode, as I have already said, is singularly ungenerous, owing, no doubt, to his grudge against the Prince. Some years before he published his book, he had met the chief agent in the transaction—'Hat' Vaughan—in Paris, and from him received a full account of the whole.

This he accepted, for we read in his 'Diary,' under date April 30, 1822 : 'He said, in answer to my inquiries about the £200 sent by the Prince to Sheridan, that it was understood to be merely for the moment, and that more was to come when wanted.' That Moore was struck by this statement is evident from his comment : 'This alters the complexion of the case materially.' Yet, holding this view, when he came to write his account his prejudices overpowered him, and he had recourse to an extraordinary hypothesis to dispose of Mr. Vaughan's testimony, believing, he said, that the aid came from Mr. Vaughan himself, who had amiably devised this fiction of the mission from the Regent to veil his own charitable action ! Mr. Vaughan was dead when he set down this odd theory.

After his book was published he was constrained, by many remonstrances, to make some alteration. Yet he allowed this strange hypothesis to stand in his text, consigning the admission that more money was to be sent to a note. Nor was this all. Instances were mentioned to him of aid from the friends supposed to have neglected Sheridan—sums of £100 and £200 sent when asked for. There was also brought to his notice other instances of the Regent's generosity under precisely the same circumstances. His friend Lord Donegal told him that the maligned Prince had sent Mr. Edward Bouverie, who was dying, the handsome sum of a thousand pounds. Compared to this

the sum sent to Sheridan appeared small—'a pittance,' Mr. Moore calls it; but the Regent had recently been victimized—'swindled,' he termed it—to a very large extent, and meant this money as the means of procuring such necessary comforts as would alleviate his friend's sufferings.* In view of which the bio-

* Mr. Croker, having later put forward, in the *Quarterly Review*, the story that the money had been received and laid out, and then repaid by 'the friends,' Moore was able to refute the statement in a satisfactory way. He applied to Dr. Bain; and Dr. Bain's grandson, Mr. Fyler, has favoured me with some letters that passed on the occasion, showing, in an amusing way, Moore's method of arranging his evidence. It will be seen that he actually dictated the letter he required, and it was sent to him in that form:

'My dear Friend,—I wrote to Charles Sheridan yesterday, begging him to apply to you upon a subject in which we are all pretty equally concerned; but, upon second thoughts I feel that I ought not to have taken this *roundabout* way, but to have written to you directly myself. You see the *Quarterly Review* has fired its long-threatened cannonade, and though it is more noisy than mischievous, yet some of my friends (Lord Lansdowne among others) think I ought to take notice of it. My intention, therefore is, in a preface to the next edition, to put two or three paragraphs, as good-tempered and conciliatory as possible, disclaiming all idea of imputing a general want of generosity in pecuniary matters to the illustrious personage concerned in these transactions, but at the same time defending the accuracy of my own statements. It is odd enough that about the only point of importance which they affect to disprove, is the account of the £200 sent through Vaughan, for which I had the authority of the two persons concerned in it, Vaughan and yourself. They say the sum was £500; that it was accepted, made use of, and afterwards repaid. Now what I want of you is (and, indeed, you could not render me a more signal service, to say nothing of what is due to

grapher was constrained to make this laboured qualification: 'Whatever we may still presume to

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the family and yourself)—to let me put two or three lines, as follow, with your signature:

'"My dear Sir,—The statement which you have made in your Life of my friend, Mr. Sheridan, that £200 was the sum proffered to me by Mr. Vaughan, and that it was respectfully declined by the family, is perfectly correct.

'"Yours, etc."

'If you prefer having the words addressed to Charles Sheridan ("My dear Charles,—The statement which Mr. Moore," etc.), it would do equally well, and perhaps better. I know it is far from pleasant for you (and, God knows, I heartily hate it myself, much as I am used to it) to have your name brought before the public in any way, yet, if honest men did not stand by each other *on a pinch*, this world would not be worth living in; besides, as your authority is already pledged on the face of my statement, this would be only the repetition of it in a more formal way, and would be, indeed, the only mode of setting all controversy on the point at rest for ever. You may depend upon my answer being such as will tend very much to remove any impression there may have been of my wishing to attack the King unfairly, and your assistance in the way I ask will materially assist me towards that object, as, in enabling me to show that I was correct in my statements, it will give me the power of being more candid and conciliatory in my admissions. In short, it will carry me triumphantly through.

'Though I had no answer to my last letter to you on my return from Ireland, I knew from Charles Sheridan that it was received and *acted upon*. My best remembrances to your daughters, and believe me,

'Ever very truly yours,

'Thomas Moore.

'Sloperton Cottage, Devizes,
'April 17, 1826.'

think of the conduct pursued towards Mr. Sheridan, I have never meant to impute to the illustrious personage concerned in these transactions, any general want of that munificence which should belong to his high station. On the contrary, I have heard more than one instance of the private generosity of that personage (far better authenticated than any that these awkward apologists have brought forward) which would render me not slow in believing any similar acts of kindness attributed to him.'

How useful might have been this seasonable aid of the Regent, is shown by the fact that shortly before Sheridan's death the bailiffs broke into the house, and, to put the climax to his miseries, were about to seize him and carry him away in his blankets. But for the stout interference of Dr. Bain, who threatened them with an indictment for murder if any injury happened to his patient, this horror would have been added to the rest. No doubt the family had been saved the indignity of receiving the Regent's charity ; but as Mr. Rogers's £150 had kept out the bailiffs before, the Regent's hundreds would have brought protection and many comforts to soothe the last hours of the dying man. To the last his faithful physician watched over him, and had the consolation to think that he had protected him from indignity, and soothed his last moments.*

* This amiable physician died in the year 1827, and the sense of his worth and almost affection with which he was regarded, is

The public now read with astonishment and sorrow a sort of appeal which one of Sheridan's friends

shown by some letters of condolence addressed to his family, as well as by the inscription on his tomb. The record of English physicians who have proved themselves the faithful friends and attendants of eminent men at such a crisis is a long and honourable one. The Princess Sophia wrote :

'I heard last night with *true* concern and great surprise of the irreparable loss which the Misses Bain have sustained. I therefore hasten to recall myself to your remembrance, and to request the favour of you to assure them of my sympathy in their affliction, and of my solicitude that their health may not suffer from this trial to their best affections. I entreat of you at the same time to accept of the assurance of my regard, and of the high esteem with which I remain,

'Yours very sincerely,

'SOPHIA MATILDA.

'Ranger's House, Blackheath,

'May 8, 1827.'

Mr. Moore's letter was also full of sympathy :

'Having been absent from home for some days, I have but just received the letter with which you have honoured me, communicating the melancholy intelligence of the death of Dr. Bain. Having seen him last in his own house, so well, and so happy, I feel no less shocked than grieved by the event. Though my intimacy with Dr. Bain was but recent, it is but a just tribute to his attaching qualities to say that there are few even among my oldest friends whose loss could be more painful to me.

'Pray have the kindness to express to the Miss Bains the very warm sympathy which I am sure they will do me the justice to believe I feel in this most trying sorrow that has befallen them, and with many thanks for the kind trouble you have taken, allow me to subscribe myself, dear Madam,

'Your ladyship's faithful and obliged servant,

'THOMAS MOORE.

'To Lady Coote.'

put in the newspapers. This touching composition was written by an Irish gentleman, Mr. Dennis O'Bryan, who had not been on good terms with him, owing to an election feud. In this pathetic appeal it was urged, 'Oh, delay not to draw aside the curtain, within which the proud spirit hides its sufferings! Prefer,' it went on, 'ministering in the chamber of sickness to ministering at the splendid sorrows that adorn the hearse!'

This produced an extraordinary sensation, and was an unusual appeal. Reprinted next day in the paper, the revelation of poor Sheridan's condition brought many callers to his door, and kindly aid was not wanting. The newspapers recorded the numbers and names of great people who called to inquire after Mr. Sheridan's health—'persons of the highest distinction,' they said, such as the Duke of York, Duke of Argyle, Lord Wellesley, Countess of Jersey, Lady Bessborough, Earl of Westmoreland, Lord Sidmouth, Lady Grey, Lady Elizabeth Whitbread, and many more. But the moments were hurrying away, and he would soon be insensible to such compliments. The reports in the newspapers spoke of refusal of all nourishment, and convulsive fits, betokening that the end was nigh.

Mrs. Sheridan now suggested that she should send for the Bishop of London, Dr. Howley, a proposal which he embraced eagerly, and with much sense of piety. That prelate arrived, and the dying

man received his aid with proper reverential disposition. It was said that then a deep awe settled on his face. 'I shall never forget it,' said one who was looking on.

Mrs. Sheridan, as we have said, was herself suffering from illness, and it was a sore exertion for her to get down and attend her husband. Soon, however, this exertion was found beyond her strength, and she had to keep her bed. Poor Sheridan, we are told, was in the habit of writing little notes to her, and a gentleman who was with him was shown one. It was written 'in a shaky hand,' and ran, 'Send Charles into my room. *The sight of me may do him good.*'

That was the significant comment on a wasted life, written by the broken *viveur* himself! Some other speeches of his were recollected, and showed that the old gaiety would flicker up for a moment. As on the appearance of Mr. W——, a precise sort of solicitor, who frequently pressed him to make some arrangement of his affairs (though there was little to 'arrange'); 'There he comes,' said the dying wit, '*with his d——d will-making face!*'* A message he sent to a lady was in the same airy spirit. 'Tell Lady Bessborough,' he said, 'that my eyes will look up to the coffin-lid with the same brilliancy as ever.' He was always proud of the lustre of his eyes.

* Still he does not appear to have made a will. I have searched for it at Somerset House.

It is to be hoped that his last moments were untroubled by privation or annoyance. After a series of convulsive fits he sank into insensibility, and expired on a Sunday, July 7, 1816, at near midday, his faithful partner being with difficulty brought to his bedside to receive his last breath.

It was determined that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey, with all the state and solemnity befitting a great political leader. His remains had been carried to the house of Mr. Peter Moore in Great George Street, Westminster, whence they were taken to the Abbey. The procession extended from the one door to the other. So splendid was the array of rank, and the number of distinguished persons that followed the hearse of one so long lost sight of and forgotten, that much surprise and wonder was excited. Two of the royal dukes asked leave to attend. The pall-bearers were earls and barons: behind them followed a train of great and well-known personages. Peers and nobles could be counted by dozens.

The pall-bearers were Lord Holland, the Duke of Bedford, Lord Lauderdale, Lord R. Spencer; while there followed Lords Thanet, Jersey, Harrington, Rosslyn, Granville, Petersham, Duncannon. Sheridan's surviving son Charles was chief mourner. The spot selected for the grave was in the Poets' Corner, between the monuments of Shakespeare and Addison; and it happened that there was just room found

for a single grave close to that of his friend Garrick.

The players of Drury Lane attended by invitation, and a short time after the funeral a monody was spoken on the stage of that theatre, which was written by Lord Byron. The service was read by the Rev. Dr. Fynes. Over his remains was placed a tablet, at the cost of his friend Mr. Peter Moore, with this inscription :*

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

BORN 1751 ;

DIED 7TH JULY, 1816.

THIS MARBLE IS THE TRIBUTE OF AN ATTACHED FRIEND,

PETER MOORE.

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* Attention was some time ago drawn to the dilapidated condition of this memorial.

# CHAPTER XI.

## CHARACTER AND GENIUS.

THE pompous and stately pageant of Sheridan's funeral, with dukes as pall-bearers and nobles as mourners, offered an almost dramatic contrast to the squalor, suffering, and desertion of his last illness. There were some who were not slow, for party purposes, to point scornfully to this eager attendance of Whig nobles. Some savage lines attacking the noble 'friends' and the Regent also, in almost scurrilous terms, appeared in the papers. These were from the pen of Mr. Moore, who, it must be said, made a large income from lampoons on the tastes and grotesque physical attributes of his former patron. After reading the scathing denunciations of the rush of noble 'friends' to attend the obsequies, it will be a surprise to find that this attendance was the result of pressing letters written by the widow herself, inviting each to the funeral! One or two declined; but it must have been difficult for any of the persons thus invited to refuse.*

* The Whigs' friends, however, felt that these reproaches of desertion were being repeated, and were themselves eagerly

Mr. Moore published some verses at the time, which, 'however intemperate in their satire and careless in their style, came evidently warm from the heart of the writer, and contained sentiments to

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anxious to accept the invitation to attend the funeral. There is a letter of Lord Wellesley's, written to excuse himself, which betrays an almost feverish nervousness. This is further evidenced by his desire that it should be published, which was accordingly done.

'I return you my sincere thanks,' he wrote to Lord Lauderdale, on June 10, 'for the trouble you have taken in communicating to me Mrs. Sheridan's very flattering wish that I should attend the funeral of the late Mr. Sheridan. The same kind disposition will, I trust, induce your lordship not to decline the offer of expressing to Mrs. Sheridan my grateful sense of this most acceptable mark of distinction. However unworthy of such an honour, I am, at least, capable of appreciating it. No person could entertain more admiration of Mr. Sheridan's talents, more respect for his eminent public merits, or more regard for his amiable character in private society. Although I had the misfortune often to differ from him in political life, I received many testimonies of his favourable opinion, which are now most valuably confirmed by Mrs. Sheridan's most distinguished notice.'

He then explains how he is detained in the country on 'indispensable business,' though if the funeral be put off for another day he might come. He would request his lordship 'to assure Mrs. Sheridan of my unfeigned solicitude to concur zealously and actively in every public and private tribute of affectionate respect to the memory of a person whose genius was an ornament to his country, and whose conversation was a delight to private society. So deeply do I feel the distinction of being considered among the number of Mr. Sheridan's friends, that should I be deprived of the honour of attending his remains to Westminster Abbey, your lordship cannot confer a greater honour on me than by communicating to the public my sentiments on this occasion.'

which, even in his cooler moments, he need not have hesitated to subscribe' (such is his apology):

'Oh it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
And friendships so false in the great and highborn;—
To think what a long line of titles may follow
The relics of him who died friendless and lorn!

'How proud they can press to the funeral array
Of him whom they shunn'd in his sickness and sorrow—
How bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day,
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow!'

In his book he took care to suppress the scathing lines addressed to the Regent on his share in the transaction:

'And thou, too, whose life, a sick epicure's dream,
Incoherent and gross, even grosser had pass'd,
Were it not for that cordial and soul-giving beam
Which his friendship and wit o'er thy nothingness cast:

'No, not for the wealth of the land that supplies thee
With millions to heap upon Foppery's shrine;
No, not for the riches of all who despise thee,
Though this would make Europe's whole opulence mine:

'Would I suffer what—ev'n in the heart that thou hast,
All mean as it is—must have consciously burn'd
When the pittance, which shame had wrung from thee at last,
And which found all his wants at an end, was return'd.'

At the time of Sheridan's death, the friend who of all others admired him with the most fervent cordiality—Lord Byron—was in Italy. About ten days after his death a letter reached him at Diodati, from one of the Drury Lane committee, Mr. Kinnaird, inviting him to write a 'monody' for delivery in that house. The poet applied himself to

this duty, and promptly despatched the poem to England. Like all such work, written to order, it is somewhat constrained and formal; but there are passages of genuine admiration. Full of generous enthusiasm is the closing portion, in which he pleads in extenuation of the follies of these 'latter days;' and, in truth, seemed to be pleading for himself, suffering at the same moment from the public condemnation which had driven him from England:

'Ah, little do they know
That what to them seemed Vice might be but Woe.
Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze
Is fix'd for ever to detract or praise.

* * * * * *

These are his portion—but if, joined to these,
Gaunt Poverty should league with deep Disease,
If the high spirit must forget to soar,
And stoop to strive with Misery at the door
To soothe Indignity, and face to face
Meet sordid Rage, and wrestle with Disgrace—
If such may be the ills which men assail,
What marvel if at last the mightiest fail!
Breasts to whom all the strength of feeling given
Bear hearts electric—charged with fire from Heaven,
Black with the rude collision, inly torn,
By clouds surrounded, and on whirlwinds borne—
Driven o'er the lowering atmosphere that nurst
Thoughts which have turned to thunder—scorch and burst.'

This sort of pleading, ingenious and effective as it may appear, would be a defence of every folly. A natural disposition which propels into extravagance or vice, or surrounding circumstances whose pres-

sure is hard to resist, become thus the really accountable agents. The truth is, most persons have established their reputation for virtue and respectability by passing through the fire.

Another poet was also dazzled by the splendid traditions of the wit over the wine-cup, the lively comedies, and the great speech. But at the distance of thirty or forty years the blots and stains are not seen or noted. Thus Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, in some stirring lines in *Saint Stephen's*, poetically extenuates Sheridan's follies :

'Room ! room ! high place, O Sheridan, for thee,
Though yet below the thrones of the great Three ;
On the same daïs, and crowned with richer gems
Than sunbeam's kiss on their proud diadems.
If eloquence can find its surest test
In the degree to which it thrills the breast,
And not the enduring thought which after calm
Retains, then thine the sceptre and the palm.
For never Fairy shot more gorgeous ray,
Nor left air duller when it died away.
He did not rule opinions, shape a creed,
Control a council, or a nation lead.
These make the power that sage and statesman claim ;
But to the orator, applause is fame.
Viewed at his best, while yet the nerves were strung,
While silvery yet the clear keen accents rung ;
While yet erect and lithe the sprightly form
And the eye lightened o'er the words of storm—
Seen then, heard then, what could Ambition hope,
Or States bestow that seem'd beyond his scope ?
He, whose wild youth had courted Scandal's frown,
Deserved her anger, and then laugh'd it down ;
He, whose gay forces seem'd, if not too light,
Too laxly disciplined for serious fight ;

He, who had known the failure, felt the sneer,
Knit burning brows in muttering, "It is here!"—
He now, one hour the acknowledged lord of all,
Hears Pitt, and joins the agitated Hall.

* * * * * *

Out upon Time! the years roll on, and, lo!
The broken wand, the fallen Prospero!
O shreds and rags of that once gorgeous soul!
O priceless pearl, dissolved amidst the bowl—
Hide, hide the vision! let our awe forbear
To note the trembling limbs, the glassy stare—
To count the sparks which through the gathering shade
Start from charr'd embers, gleam on wrecks, and fade!—
To hear of bailiffs wrangling round the bed!
Hush! and uncover—homage to the dead!'

Such dramatic contrasts—Westminster Hall and the bailiffs—ever arrest the eye. But the well-meant extenuation will not hold. This admiration of varied and brilliant gifts is often deceptive enough, and blinds the admirer to vital defects of character. Such gifts are, indeed, often destructive of better qualities. Accuracy and sincerity are worn away by the sacrifice of truthful details to the necessities of the witty speech or laughter-moving story. Waste of money and fortune leads to shifts that are not reputable, and long convivial sittings enfeeble the energies and create a distaste for the sober business of life. But when these things become habitual, and life itself a jest, the result is permanent and fatal.

And this decay affects not merely the private character, but spreads and speedily taints all political

action. This was particularly illustrated in the curious and capricious changes of front which Sheridan exhibited at different periods, and which Mr. Moore gently considers displays of independence:

'If to watch over the rights of the subject, and guard them against the encroachments of power, be, even in safe and ordinary times, a task full of usefulness and honour, how much more glorious to have stood sentinel over the same sacred trust through a period so trying as that with which Sheridan had to struggle—when liberty itself had become suspected and unpopular—when authority had succeeded in identifying patriotism with treason, and when the few remaining and deserted friends of freedom were reduced to take their stand on a narrowing isthmus, between anarchy on one side and the angry incursions of power on the other. How manfully he maintained his ground in a position so critical, the annals of England and of the champions of her Constitution will long testify. The truly national spirit, too, with which, when that struggle was passed, and the dangers to liberty from without seemed greater than any from within, he forgot all past differences in the one common cause of Englishmen, and, while others "gave but the *left* hand to the country,"* he proffered her *both* of his, stamped a seal of sincerity on his public conduct which, in

* His own words.

the eyes of all England, authenticated it a genuine patriotism.'

It will seem harsh to question the truth of this panegyric, but it is little more than a romance, and would have made his contemporaries smile. It is remarkable that the praise he has received for his 'patriotic' conduct is generally confined to a single transaction, viz., his supporting the Government on the occasion of the mutiny—that is to say, the nation against the rebellion of its sailors—which, at most, showed that he was on that occasion superior to the littleness of party. But even this merit is diminished when it is remembered that at this time he had begun to support the Government generally. The whole key to his political action will be found in his devotion to the Prince, whose vizier he always looked forward to becoming, and this accounts for his changes of attitude, his isolation from his friends, and his opposition to them.

In the very next paragraph to this glowing one, in which Mr. Moore claims for Sheridan a patriotic 'independence' of principle, he deals with this significant desertion of his party friends. A politician who acts for his 'own hand,' and is at variance with his leaders, incurs the suspicion that he is placing the gratification of personal feelings above the interests of party. But Mr. Moore says this was further proof of an independent spirit :

'To his own party, it is true, his conduct presents a very different phasis; and if implicit partisanship were the sole merit of a public man, his movements at this and other junctures were far *too independent and unharnessed* to lay claim to it.' The two questions to be asked on such occasions are: Was the occasion a fitting one? and was there no corrupt inducement? But the motives for such 'unharnessing' cannot be thus limited. The positive detestation of Sheridan expressed by the men of his own party, and their complaints of his unreliability, seem to have produced in him reciprocal feeling; and the harness became as uncomfortable to him as he was undesirable as a yoke-fellow to them. No doubt he had his grievances, and he was often loud in his complaints of the way he had been treated. And Mr. Moore's final compliment only shows that he felt the weakness of the case, when he urges that 'it seems impossible not to concede that even to the obligations of party' he was as faithful '*as could be expected from a spirit that so far outgrew its limits*, and, in paying the tax of fidelity while he asserted the freedom of dissent, showed that he could sacrifice everything to it, *except his opinion*. Through all these occasional variations, too, he remained a genuine Whig to the last.'

As it has been stated before, a man thoroughly imbued with the principles of a party holds them too dear to let personal motives, the sense of injury,

or the wish to retaliate injuries, interfere with its interests. But what is the extraordinary spectacle presented all through Sheridan's course? We find him assailing publicly in succession Burke, Windham, Tierney, Fox, Grey, and Grenville—all the 'fine flower,' in fact, of his own side. When the genuine Whigs took office with the Constitutional party in their own true interests, he stood aloof. When they stood aloof and opposed the weak Addington, he joined him.

But one slight instance will prove how carelessly he dealt with the strict bonds of party allegiance, and on what trifling grounds he broke them. When, under Mr. Addington's premiership, a serious attack was made on the administration of the navy, then directed by Lord St. Vincent, Mr. Pitt was joined by Fox and his friends in pressing for an inquiry, the latter believing that it would help to vindicate Lord St. Vincent. Sheridan stood alone in resisting it, urging that it was an affront to the reputation of a gallant officer. This unexpected aid, as we have seen, was recompensed by Lord St. Vincent's offering him for his son Tom a post at Malta, which Mr. Sheridan, after some hesitation, felt constrained to decline. While he is entitled to all credit for this instance of self-denial, it is not unfair to consider that the worst construction would have been placed upon the acceptance of the post, and the clamour at such direct payment for service rendered would have been fatal.

It would be an entertaining study of character to show what opposite impulses controlled his nature, working fitfully against each other, and overpowering anything like purpose. So undisciplined was it, that it almost seemed sufficient for him to declare an intention, to find it set aside. We are told that he 'undertook the office of accepting or rejecting the new plays offered to Drury Lane; but had neither leisure nor inclination to attend to it.' There were piles of long-forgotten tragedies and comedies which he had promised to consider, and had never opened. "Mr. Kemble," says Mr. Boaden, "whom I one day found sitting very patiently in this great man's library, pointed to this *funeral* pile, and added to his action the declaration of his belief, that in these morning attendances he had read more of these productions than ever had been, or would be, read by the proprietor himself."'

Yet deluding himself as to this neglect, he would expatiate on the hardship of his special duty of a manager, likening it to 'the life of the ordinary of Newgate, a constant superintendence of executions. The number of authors whom he was forced to extinguish was, he said, "a perpetual literary massacre, that made St. Bartholomew's altogether shrink in comparison. Play-writing, singly, accounted for the employment of that immense multitude who drain away obscure years beside the inkstand. It singly accounted for the rise of paper, which had

exhausted the rags of England and Scotland, and had almost stripped off the last covering of Ireland. He had counted plays until calculation sank under the number; and every rejected play of them all seemed, like the clothes of a Spanish beggar, to turn into a living, restless, merciless, indefatigable progeny."'

Even the instances of his good-nature and 'good heart' so often put forward, offer some weak place. As when we are told of his horse being stolen, to his great grief and annoyance. By offering a reward the thief was discovered, but Sheridan refused to prosecute. 'It is true the man is known, but consider, he is only a poor schoolmaster who was in danger of the bailiffs, from whom he attempted to escape; and you know, it was natural for him to prefer riding away, to running away from them.' So when his pigs were stolen, he similarly declined to take any steps, declaring, 'The man who stole my nine pigs was wretchedly poor; indeed, I heard that his wife and nine children were in actual want, so it is no wonder that he should take the pigs; besides, after all, it was but one apiece!'

It needs little to see that this was but a spurious sort of compassion, and that he indulged this sentiment at the expense of the community, who would suffer by his toleration.

'As a Parliamentary orator,' Mr. Fraser-Rae says truly, 'his place is in the front rank.' He had that

proverbial gift of his countrymen, a union of deep sentiment with humour. A very ordinary Irish speaker contrives to amuse his audience with comic pictures, set off with mimicry and other pleasant arts, and will presently pass to serious strains, which he will deal with in a pathetic and even tearful fashion. In other cases, where a reputation for facetious speaking is enjoyed, the speaker finds that sentiment is not expected from him, and he is not taken *au sérieux*. Sheridan, however, could touch both chords. One of his most special gifts was displayed in an abundant raillery, when he would exhibit the subject of his attack in a series of ludicrous associations, the last suggesting a fresh one, much as Sydney Smith would deal with a ludicrous image. Such displays always gave delight to his hearers. In his latter days, however, this degenerated into a sort of buffoonery which often suggests the manner of O'Connell, an association further suggested by his introduction of vulgar stories.

In Sheridan's comparatively isolated position he was accustomed to bring forward regular motions on great national questions, such as the conduct of the war, the state of the finances, etc. For these 'set speeches' he prepared himself with extraordinary industry, collecting facts for an elaborate statement which was to fill several hours.* In these

* Mr. Moore is astray when he states that this labour was applied to all his speeches—a conclusion he arrives at from the

formal set pieces he uttered much prepared declamation; but they rather suggest the system of the advocate, who gets up any case that is 'briefed' to him. His speech in reply to Lord Mornington, who, in January, 1794, urged the vigorous prosecution of the war, has been considered to be his most important effort, after his great Indian oration. It was, in truth, an elaborate pleading for the French Republicans, adopting the fashion of Fox and others of the Liberals who laboured to prove that their country was in the wrong. This effort is in a large and dignified style; the facts marshalled are abundant, and the arguments are cogent. His next great speech, delivered exactly a year later, was also of a Republican cast, and urged the restoration of the Habeas Corpus Act, which had been suspended. His object was to maintain that there was 'no traitorous conspiracy' in the country, and in his own favourite manner, which might be called one of the 'common forms' of his oratory, he threw much ridicule on the evidences of such a conspiracy. 'A formidable instrument was talked of, to be employed against the cavalry; it appeared upon evidence *to be a teetotum* in a window at Sheffield. There was a

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sketches he found among Sheridan's papers. These I have seen. They are often no more than a word, or an image jotted hastily down on the blank leaf of a letter. Notes of this kind are mere memoranda, and are, in fact, the very opposite of laborious.

camp in a back shop, an arsenal provided with nine muskets, and an exchequer containing nine pounds and one bad shilling.' This was pleasantly humorous, but the truth was that such conspiracies did exist, as indeed it was only natural that they should from the contagion of the French revolution. The utterances of Sheridan himself and his friends were at this season almost seditious. Still there was through the whole a broad, manly strain of declamation worthy of the company to which Burke and Fox belonged. But with a few years we find his tone changed, and the assailer of Pitt had become the apologist of Addington, while the defender of Bonaparte was now uttering invectives against him.*

In truth, as we have seen before, throughout his career Sheridan seems to have been influenced by 'men, not measures.' It thus almost appeared that his quarrel with Burke, and the latter's denunciation of revolutionary principles, had made Sheridan take the opposite side. His dislike of the Grenvilles caused him to oppose them. His onslaughts were

* Lord Grey's opinion was always unfavourable. It was thus he accounted for the change in Sheridan's treatment of Bonaparte. It seems that the French Institute had his name and Heyne's before them for election, and selected the latter. Sheridan, as Lord Grey learned from Richardson, was much piqued, and 'this slight was the cause of his tirades against Bonaparte and the French.' It is certainly curious that in the earlier part of his course he, like his friend Fox, used to deliver quasi vindications of the 'Corsican upstart.'

directed more against Pitt, whom he disliked, than his measures. Another of his great efforts was his speech against the increase of the assessed taxes, delivered in January, 1798, when his attacks on Napoleon began.*

* In these and others of his speeches, up to about the date of his support of Mr. Addington, we find the same lofty spirit; nor are they disfigured by those passages of rather low humour in which he afterwards indulged—such as the stories of 'Johnny M'Cree,' 'Bragge is a good dog,' etc. These, though they extorted a vacant laugh, lost him the respect of the judicious. In his closing years he seemed to rely on two devices—either an elaborately artificial similitude, or a broad story. The former will be understood from this specimen: The Master-General of Ordnance had written a paper which Sheridan was ridiculing. 'He made it an argument of posts. There were certain detached data, like advanced works, to keep the enemy at a distance from the main object in debate. His very queries were in casemates. No impression, therefore, was to be made on this fortress of sophistry by desultory observation; it was necessary to sit down before it and assail it by regular approaches.' This system of elaboration, however ingenious, was purely mechanical. It will be interesting to put beside it a passage illustrating Burke's fashion of metaphor: 'The great seal, it appears, is to be affixed to a commission robbing the executive of its due formation. A composition of wax and copper is to represent the sovereign. So preposterous a fiction merits only contempt and ridicule. I disclaim all allegiance, I renounce all obedience to a King so formed. I worship the gods of our glorious Constitution, but I will not bow down before Priapus.'

Further, we may cite a well-known, highly-finished illustration of Canning's, which added immeasurable force to his argument. This is found in a speech delivered at Plymouth, in 1823:

'Our present repose is no more a proof of inability to act than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen those

'Sheridan's taste,' says a severe writer in the *Quarterly Review*, 'was radically vicious. His favourite sentiments were clap-trap: his favourite phraseology was tinsel. The florid rhetoric, the apostrophes, and the invocations which imposed upon his listeners appear now only fit to be addressed to the galleries by some hero of a melodrama. There is occasionally a fine image, or a splendid sentence. Such as he was, however, he became entirely by unremitting exertion . . . he marked the precise place in which what he meant to seem the involuntary exclamation, "*Good God, Mr. Speaker!*" was to be introduced. He never, in truth, acquired readiness by practice.'

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mighty masses that float in the waters above your town is a proof that they are devoid of strength, and incapable of being fitted out for action. You well know, gentlemen, how soon one of those stupendous masses now reposing on their shadows in perfect stillness—how soon, upon any call of patriotism or necessity, it would assume the likeness of an animated being instinct with life and motion—how soon it would ruffle its swelling plumage—how quickly it would put forth all its beauty and its bravery, collect its scattered elements of strength, and awaken its dormant thunder! Such is one of those magnificent machines when springing from matter into a display of might. Such is England herself: while apparently passive and motionless, she silently concentrates the power to be put forth on an adequate occasion.'

This passage has ever commanded admiration, from its exquisite beauty and appropriateness. As we read, it carries a sort of conviction, and strengthens the argument; whereas Sheridan's 'fortifications,' like the wit of his scandalous College, have an artificial, isolated air

Sheridan's habit in the preparation of his speeches was to carefully provide effective 'bits,' which he wrote out and got by heart, filling in the intervals with 'impromptu' passages, as in his great Westminster Hall orations. Several reports of these appeared, and the showy portions have become familiar from recitation. Many years ago the short-hand writer's notes were published by direction of Sir G. Cornewall Lewis, when Mr. Fraser-Rae called attention to the extraordinary discrepancy between what was really *said* and what was published. He contrasts the following specimens:

'But though he stated the difficulties which the managers had to encounter, he did not mean to say that the proofs which they had adduced were in any degree defective. Weak, no doubt, in some parts, and incompetent, and yet more deplorable, as undistinguished by any compunctious visitings of repentant accomplices, but yet enough, and enough in sure validity, to abash the front of guilt no longer hid, and flash conviction on conscientious judges.'

The following is the true version:

'Having said this, I think it extremely possible that your lordships may imagine I am begging indulgence for weak and incompetent evidence. No, my lords; I will be bold to say that there is now before you, upon this charge, a mass of full, competent evidence—strong as ever abashed the confidence of courageous guilt, or brought conviction home to the hearts of conscientious judges.'

Few passages, he says, are more frequently quoted as a specimen of Sheridan's style than the following:

'Doond Sing had sworn once—then again—and made nothing

of it; then comes he with another, and swears a third time; and in company does better. Single-handed he can do nothing, but succeeds by platoon-swearing and volleys of oaths.'

Now, what Sheridan said was:

'I imagine your lordships will now think we have done with Doond Sing. No such thing. Here he is again, the third time, swearing before Sir Elijah Impey. But he is not to be trusted by himself; he is a bad one single-handed, and, as it was a military duty, he is coupled with somebody else; he is joined with Mir Ahmud Ali, Subadar, and at last he hits the mark.'

Referring to Captain Gordon, the reporter makes Sheridan say it was difficult to imagine any man could tell a benefactor—

'The breath that I now draw, next to heaven, I owe to you; my existence is an emanation from your bounty; I am indebted to you beyond all possibility of return; and therefore my gratitude shall be your destruction.'

What he actually uttered was:

'If he was so deluded, he may explain that delusion to your lordships; but till that time I will not believe that Captain Gordon, who said to the Begums, "The welfare of your servant is entirely owing to your favour and benevolence," meant to say, "And the gratitude of your servant shall be your destruction."'

'Some of the longer passages in this speech are commonly singled out as specimens of the rhodomontade to which Sheridan was believed to be prone; the following is one of these passages:

'O Faith! O Justice! I conjure you, by your sacred names, to depart for a moment from this place, though it be your peculiar residence; nor hear your names profaned by such a sacrilegious combination as that which I am now compelled to repeat—where all the fair forms of nature and art, truth and peace, policy and

honour, shrank back aghast from the deleterious shade! where all existences, nefarious and vile, had sway! where, amidst the black agents on one side, and Middleton with Impey on the other, the toughest head, the most unfeeling heart! the great figure of the piece, characteristic in his place, stood aloof and independent from the puny profligacy in his train! but far from idle and inactive—turning a malignant eye on all mischief that awaited him! the multiplied apparatus of temporizing expedients and intimidating instruments! now cringing on his prey and fawning on his vengeance! now quickening the limpid pace of craft, and forcing every stand that retiring nature can make in the heart! violating the attachments and the decorums of life! sacrificing every emotion of tenderness and honour! and flagitiously levelling all the distinctions of national characteristics! with a long catalogue of crimes and aggravations, beyond the reach of thought for human malignity to perpetrate, or human vengeance to punish.'

'The few words out of which the imaginative reporter has evolved so large a mass of trash are:

'O Justice! Faith! Policy! fly from this spot—though your temple and sanctuary—for a moment, and do not hear that human arrogancy has charged you with such crimes; for it is not in the power of human vengeance to punish for such crimes.'

And yet, bombastic as the accepted specimens are, they seem suspiciously like what was a favourite manner of Sheridan's. Could it be that he had expanded and enlarged the declamatory passages, so as to be more effective? It must be said, too, that the supposed spurious version of the allusion to Doond Sing and his swearing is more effective, and more like Sheridan's style than the other.*

* The circumstance that the Hastings Speech, delivered to the House of Commons, as well as the 'School for Scandal,' had never

Almost his last fine and genuine burst was prompted by an illiberal attempt at exclusion on the part of the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn. We can hardly credit now, that these potentates should have attempted to refuse admission to the Bar, to reporters in the House of Commons: 'Give me but the liberty of the Press, and I will give to the Minister a venal House of Peers. I will give him a servile and corrupt House of Commons. I will give him the full swing of patronage and office. I will give him the whole host of ministerial influence. I will give him all the power that place can confer upon him, to purchase submission and overawe resistance; and yet, armed with the liberty of the Press, I will go forth to meet him undismayed. I will attack the mighty fabric he has reared with that mightier engine. I will shake down corruption from

been published, has been noticed. The excuse was that the author could not satisfy himself, or find time for the intended correction. As we have seen, he often entertained a plan for the publication, in a complete and revised form, of all his works; but as he was to receive a large sum for the undertaking, serious labour was indispensable, which was out of the question. It was said, indeed, as to the play, that he wished to ensure the sole right, which he would have lost in publication; but then he lost the profits of the sale of copies, which would have been enormous. He was accustomed, however, to give a sentimental reason for his proceedings with regard to the speech: 'No, I have since shaken him' (Hastings) 'by the hand, and we have drunk our wine together, and during my life it shall never be published.' He added, as he walked towards the window, 'No, and I won't destroy it—money shall never tempt me to give it up.'

its height, and bury it beneath the ruins of those abuses it was meant to shelter.'

On this question, indeed, he was ever staunch; and on every opportunity stood forward as the defender of the Press. In this he was consistent. When a debate arose in 1799, as to putting down Sunday newspapers, he stood up manfully for them, though he could not resist a 'buffooning' remark, observing that, 'In the law, as it at present exists, there was an exception in favour of selling mackerel on the Lord's Day; but would the noble lord recollect that people might think stale news as bad as stale mackerel?'*

Returning once again to the vast obligations under which he has laid his countrymen by the gift of his two comedies, what affects us chiefly is wonder at the permanent vitality and popularity of these pieces. They seem ever fresh, varied, and enjoyable. Familiar and even hackneyed as is every incident of the plot, and every one of the characters, there is ever a sense of novelty; for the play always seems to bear new and different treatment. This is evidence of the highest order of composition, and it is here that the pieces of our own day fail.

* But one of Sheridan's friends candidly tells us 'No man was ever more sore and frightened at criticism than he was, from his first outset in life. He dreaded the newspapers, and always courted their friendship. I have many times heard him say, "Let me but have the periodical Press on my side, and there should be nothing in this country which I would not accomplish."'

They are conceived in a small spirit, and confound surface peculiarities with real traits of character. A character so admirably written as is Joseph Surface, may be played in many ways, save perhaps one—that is, in the transparently hypocritical or 'intense' style. Joseph was a gentleman by birth and training, and was intelligent enough to know how little effect mere 'cant' would have on a country girl like Lady Teazle; but 'sentiment,' if adroitly applied, would be a useful weapon. We have often seen in modern days the series of remonstrances offered by Joseph, such as that the lady's reputation could be *too* healthy, was dying of a plethora, etc., urged with the solemn gravity of an argument; whereas it was intended as a cynical attempt to laugh away prudery. I have shown, too, before that Lady Teazle's character opens many questions. Was she still rustic and simple, or had she learnt the lessons of fashionable life? So with Charles, whose generous speeches and actions should be shown as highly impulsive, not deliberate. The solution is only to be found by the actor who has most deeply studied human nature and the instincts of character.

A regular study of 'The School for Scandal,' with full discussion of its blemishes and merits, might serve to bring out faithfully the true principles of comedy and treatment of character on the stage. Like every great work, it suggests as much as it actually supplies. This is shown particularly

in the treatment of such a character as Joseph Surface. Mrs. Oliphant, in her recent monograph, offers the following rather singular theory of interpretation: 'No doubt it would have been higher art could the dramatist have deceived his audience as well as the personages of the play, and made us also parties in the surprise of the discovery. But this is what no one has as yet attempted, not even Shakespeare; and we have no right to object to Sheridan that we are in the secret of Joseph's baseness all the time, just as we are in the secret of Tartuffe's, and can with difficulty understand how it is that he deceives anyone. There remains for the comedy of the future (or the tragedy, which, wherever the deeper chords of life are touched, comes to very much the same thing) a still greater achievement—that of inventing an Iago who shall deceive the audience as well as the Othello upon whom he plays, and be found out only by us and our hero at the same moment. Probably, could such a thing be done, the effect would be too great, and the interest and horror of the crowd too great.'

This, however specious, it will be felt is founded on an erroneous idea of the relation of the spectators to the drama. They are 'in the secret'—in all the secrets. First, as regards position, they are assumed to be not looking on from a distance or through an opening, but are on the scene and beside the performers. The limit is that they cannot know what

is to take place, and there the dramatist may keep his own secret. It will be urged, why should not the same mode of deception hoodwink *them*, if it hoodwink the other actors? But it is as in real life; these arts may deceive the person on whom they are exerted—they are not exerted on the audience—and the 'looker-on,' as is well known, from his impartial attitude must see more of the game.

Admirers of 'The Rivals' and of 'The School for Scandal' are not aware of the abundant, or perhaps redundant, strokes of humour which later stage-managers felt compelled to retrench when preparing their 'acting version.' In the library of the Garrick Club is the original prompter's copy of 'The Rivals' as used at Covent Garden Theatre, sparingly 'cut,' and only lines here and there being left out. The total amount is trifling. But in a copy prepared many years later the cutting is on much more wholesale scale; and of the scene between Sir Anthony and his son, to be given presently, it is noted, 'This is often omitted in the representation.' I quote a specimen from 'The Rivals,' where, it must be said, the play has gained. We see Sheridan's favourite weakness of elaborating an idea till it fatigued, and it is clear that here he had the good sense to allow some skilled hand to apply the knife unsparingly. Julia, being with her friend Lydia, is alarmed by the approach of Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop, who, she says on another occasion, 'shall treat me as long

as she chooses with her select words, so ingeniously *misapplied* without being *mispronounced.*' Later:

'LYDIA. Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books—quick, quick! Fling "Peregrine Pickle" under the toilet; throw "Roderick Random" into the closet; put "The Innocent Adultery" into "The Whole Duty of Man;" thrust "Lord Aimworth" under the sofa; cram "Ovid" behind the bolster, and put "The Man of Feeling" into your pocket. So, so. Now lay "Mrs. Chapone" in sight, and leave "Fordyce's Sermons" open on the table.

'LUCY. O, burn it, ma'am! the hairdresser has torn away as far as "Proper Pride."

'LYDIA. Never-mind; open at "Sobriety." Fling me "Lord Chesterfield's Letters."'

This seems doing the idea to death, to say nothing of introducing an elaborate hypocrisy, inconsistent with airy comedy. But the skilful stage-manager saw that the names of a couple of books would suffice, and he 'put the "Man of Feeling" in your pocket.'

This idea 'tells' with an audience more effectively than a whole library. But it so tickled Sheridan's fancy that he had elaborated it previously at an awkward length. Lydia asks her maid: 'Could you not get the "Reward of Constancy"?'

'LUCY. No, indeed, ma'am.

'LYDIA. Nor "The Fatal Connection"?

'LUCY. No, indeed, ma'am.

'LYDIA. Nor "The Mistakes of the Heart"?

'LUCY. Ma'am, as ill-luck would have it, Mr. Bull said Miss Sukey Saunter had just fetched it away.

'LYDIA. Did you inquire for "The Delicate Distress"?

'LUCY. Or, "The Memoirs of Lady Woodford"? Yes, indeed, ma'am.

'Lydia. Well, what have you brought me?

'Lucy. This is "The Gordian Knot;" and this, "Peregrine Pickle." Here are "The Tears of Sensibility," and "Humphrey Clinker." This is "The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality, written by herself;" and here the second volume of "The Sentimental Journey."'

Surely never was a conceit so laboured!

When Sir Anthony mentions the qualifications he desires in a wife, he adds as an illustration of the use of her knowing her letters, and counting 'as far as twenty,' that 'the first would enable her to work A. A. upon my linen, and the latter would be quite sufficient to prevent her giving me shirt No. 1, and a stock No. 2;' all which is farcical and below the situation.

In another scene Faulkland asks what songs Miss Melville sang:

'Abs. Stay, now, they were some pretty melancholy purling-stream airs, I warrant. Perhaps you may recollect—did she sing, "When absent from my soul's delight"?

'Acres. No, that wa'n't it.

'Abs. Or, "Go, gentle gales." (*Sings*, "Go, gentle gales.")

'Acres. O no! nothing like it. Odds slips! now I recollect one of them—"My heart's my own, my will is free!" (*Sings.*)'

In the scene between Sir Anthony and his son, the Captain says, 'My inclinations are fixed on another.'

'Sir A. They are, are they? Well, that's lucky, because you will have more merit in your obedience to me.'

(Which seems far fetched, and out of keeping with Sir Anthony's dictatorial nature.)

'Abs. Sir, my heart is engaged to an angel.

'Sir A. Then pray let it send an excuse. It is very sorry, but business prevents its waiting on her.

'Abs. But my vows are pledged to her.

'Sir A. Let her foreclose, Jack; they are not worth redeeming. Besides, you have the angel's vows in exchange, I suppose—so there can be no loss there.'

At the close of the scene the Captain asks where the lady lodges:

'Sir A. What a dull question! Only in the Grove here.

'Abs. O, then I can call on her on my way to the coffee-house.

'Sir A. On your way to the coffee-house. You'll set your heart down on your way to the coffee-house, hey? Ah, you leaden-nerved, wooden-hearted dolt! But come along, you shall see her directly.'

At the conclusion of a scene with Faulkland, how unsuitable are these words in the mouth of the airy Captain: 'A poor industrious devil like me, who have toiled and drudged and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people's folly, may in pity be allowed to swear and grumble a little.'

But there is an entire scene omitted which will be new to the reader, and of a highly farcical character, when the Captain, going to fight his duel, awkwardly encounters his father on the South Parade. The Captain enters, hiding his sword under his greatcoat:

'Abs. A sword seen in the streets of Bath would cause as great an alarm as a mad dog. How provoking is this Faulkland—

never punctual! I shall be obliged to go without him at last. O, the devil! here's Sir Anthony! How shall I escape him?

(*Muffles up his face, and takes a circuit to go off.*)

'*Enter* SIR ANTHONY.

'SIR A. How one may be deceived at a little distance. Only that I see he don't know me, I could have sworn that was Jack! Hey! Gad's life, it is! Why, Jack, you dog! what are you afraid of? Hey! sure I am right! Why, Jack—Jack Absolute! (*Goes up to him.*)

'ABS. Really, sir, you have the advantage of me. I don't remember ever to have had the honour—— My name is Sanderson, at your service.

'SIR A. Sir, I beg your pardon—I took you—hey!—why, zounds—it is! Stay! (*Looks up to his face.*) So, so. Your servant, Mr. Sanderson! Why, you scoundrel, what tricks are you after now?

'ABS. O, a joke, sir, a joke! I came here on purpose to look for you, sir!

'SIR A. You did! Well, I am glad you were so lucky! But what are you muffled up so for? What's this for, hey?

'ABS. 'Tis cool, sir, isn't it? rather chilly, somehow. But I shall be late—I have a particular engagement.

'SIR A. Stay! why, I thought you were looking for me? Pray, Jack, where is't you are going?

'ABS. Going, sir?

'SIR A. Ay, where are you going?

'ABS. Where am I going?

'SIR A. You unmannerly puppy!

'ABS. I—was going, sir, to—to—to Lydia—sir, to Lydia—to make matters up, if I could; and I was looking for you, sir, to—to——

'SIR A. To go with you, I suppose. Well, come along.

'ABS. O no, sir, not for the world! I wished to meet with you, sir, to—to—to—— You find it cool, I'm sure, sir; you'd better not stay out.

'Sir A. Cool? not at all. Well, Jack, and what will you say to Lydia?

'Abs. O, sir, beg her pardon, humour her, promise and vow—— But I detain you, sir. Consider the cold air on your gout.

'Sir A. O, not at all. I am in no hurry. Ah, Jack, you youngsters, when once you are wounded here (*putting his hand to* Absolute's *breast*). Hey! what the deuce have you got here?

'Abs. Nothing, sir, nothing.

'Sir A. What's this? Here's something d——d hard!

'Abs. O, trinkets, sir, trinkets—a bauble for Lydia.

'Sir A. Nay, let me see your taste. (*Pulls his coat open; the sword falls.*) Trinkets! a bauble for Lydia! Zounds! sirrah, you are not going to cut her throat, are you?

'Abs. Ha! ha! ha! I thought it would divert you, sir, though I didn't mean to tell you till afterwards.

'Sir A. You didn't? Yes, this is a very diverting incident, truly!

'Abs. Sir, I'll explain to you. You know, sir, Lydia is romantic—devilish romantic—and very absurd, of course. Now, sir, I intend, if she refuses to forgive me, to unsheath this sword, and swear I'll fall upon its point and expire at her feet!

'Sir A. Fall upon a fiddlestick's end! Why, I suppose it's the very thing that would please you! Get along, you fool!

'Abs. Well, sir, you shall hear of my success—you shall hear. "O Lydia! forgive me, or this pointed steel," says I.

Sir A. "O booby! slash away, and welcome!" says she. Get along! and d—n your trinkets! [*Exit* Absolute.'

This farcical scene, suggested by the one in 'She Stoops to Conquer,' where Tony is taken for a highwayman by his mother, is amusing enough, and lends further emphasis to the preparations for the duel. It certainly adds some grotesque touches to the relations between the father and son, of which the audience is always willing to hear more.

On the other hand, it illustrates in an amusing way the easy morality of Sheridan, who seems to think it a matter of course that his hero should baffle his fond father with a whole series of ingenious falsehoods or fictions. It must be remembered that all these suppressed portions belonged to the piece as acted under Sheridan's direction, and are therefore entitled to be respected.

It is curious to find that instead of the present merry ending or tag, when Acres promises a dance at the New Rooms, 'odds tabors and pipes!' there was a sentimental finish, mainly developed by Faulkland and his Julia, which shows that these characters were intended by the author to be far more prominent than modern arrangements are inclined to admit:

'FAULK. Our partners are stolen from us, Jack—I hope to be congratulated by each other—yours, for having checked in time the errors of an ill-directed imagination, which might have betrayed an innocent heart; and mine, for having, by her gentleness and candour, reformed the unhappy temper of one, who by it made wretched whom he loved most, and tortured the heart he ought to have adored.

'ABS. Well, we have both tasted the bitters as well as the sweets of love; with this difference only, that you always prepared the bitter cup for yourself, while I——

'LYDIA. Was always obliged to me for it, hey! Mr. Modesty? But come, no more of that; our happiness is now as unalloyed as general.

'JULIA. Then let us study to preserve it so; and while Hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future bliss, let us deny its pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting. *When*

*hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest hurtless flowers; but ill-judging Passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them when its leaves are dropt!'*

An amazing bit of sentiment, which no actor of our day could deliver with gravity.

The episode of Faulkland and Julia seems to be considered a sort of blemish or excrescence, and is compressed, huddled over, and minimized as much as possible. Yet it is an excellent and even interesting piece of comedy; and were it treated in a conscientious, earnest spirit by first-rate performers, would entertain as much as the rest. No better proof of this could be found than that it was once played by Kemble and his gifted sister. He had also attempted Charles Surface.*

We have seen that the first night's performance was comparatively bad, and the play almost unsuited for the stage. Some wholesale alterations seem to have been made. The newspaper reports of the next day say that 'this comedy was acted so imperfectly, either from the timidity of the actors or from an improper distribution of the parts, that it was generally disapproved; however, we do not pretend to say that the original merit of the piece was so great that nothing but the bad performance of it could possibly hurt it.'

* Allusion has been before made to this performance. I possess a copy of this interesting bill:

For the Benefit of
Mademoiselle PARISOT.

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE,
On WEDNESDAY next, MAY 16, 1798.
Their Majesties' Servants will perform
A Comedy called the

# RIVALS.

Sir Anthony Absolute, Mr. KING.
Captain Absolute, Mr. PALMER.
Faulkland, Mr. KEMBLE.
Acres, Mr. BANNISTER, jun.
Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Mr. RUSSELL. Fag, Mr. TRUEMAN.
David, Mr. HOLLINGSWORTH.
Coachman, Mr. MADDOCKS.
Mrs. Malaprop, Miss POPE.
Lydia Languish, Mrs. JORDAN.
Julia, Mrs. SIDDONS.
Lucy, Miss HEARD. Maid, Mrs. JONES.

At the end of the Second Act of the Comedy
will be presented a New Ballet
(for that night only) called
KITTY and JEMMY,
To which will be added a new
Grand Dramatick Romance called
BLUE BEARD.

On January 28th, a Saturday, it was represented for the second time, having undergone much judicious pruning and alteration. 'Its present state is widely different from that of the first night's representation. Sir Lucius, being retouched, has now the appearance of a character; and his assigning Beverley's reflection on his country as the ground for his desire to quarrel with him is a reasonable pretext, and wipes off the stigma before undeservedly thrown on the sister kingdom. The author says he was "misconceived," and that he had no intention of reflecting on his country; but such an impression was certainly left. One of the alterations is one of the most brilliant touches of the piece, an incident which "gave a very favourable turn to the fable," viz., where young Acres now delivers his challenge to his friend Absolute, begging him to carry it to Beverley, not knowing the two characters composed but one; its being first given to Sir Lucius, the person who indited it, was highly inconsistent.'

To take back and recast a play would now be held a fatal proceeding, and the thoroughness and boldness of the measure does credit to the early adroitness of Sheridan.

Still the astonishing problem remains, how a very young man of little knowledge or experience should have executed such a feat. I have shown, however, that his power was *borné*, and completely spent

itself, as it were, in the exertion. He came to the task, his mind saturated with the shifting scenes and incidents of Bath life and character. These were vividly imprinted on his memory, and his own share of personal adventure had furnished him with a drama ready made, as it were, with background and characters all complete. The testimony of one of his sisters, Mrs. Le Fanu, is positive on this point, and is worth bearing in mind. She says she frequently 'heard him speak on the subject, long before the play appeared;' many of the characters and incidents related to persons known to them both, and were laughingly talked over with his family. 'She adds that he often saw his own name the sport of calumny, which, although it sometimes excited a smile, yet often gave rise to more painful feelings. At Bath, then famous for the manufacture and circulation of ungrounded stories, his duels and other romantic adventures were magnified and misrepresented in a thousand different ways. When he was recovering from his wounds, it was one of his amusements to read the daily accounts of himself in the papers and say, "Let me see what they report of me to-day; I wish to know whether I am dead or alive," etc. (The ridiculous and contradictory reports then afloat, certainly gave rise to the highly humorous duel scenes in "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal.") Other falsehoods sank deeper into his heart; and having a mind turned to reflec-

tion, although his spirits were often led away by gaiety, the young poet conceived the noble plan of attacking the "Hydra, scandal, in his den," and exposing, in a spirited picture, the wide mischief arising from a censorious spirit.'

'The School for Scandal' has not been pruned to the same extent; but the players have introduced their own various 'improvements' or 'gags.' As when Joseph retires finally, he says he had better follow Lady Sneerwell, 'lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure his brother.' But the player must put in 'For the man who,' etc. And at the conclusion of the screen scene, when Joseph says to Sir Peter, 'You shall hear me; for the man who shuts out conviction by refusing to——' Here the author closes the scene—'*Exeunt talking.*' But it must be improved, and Sir Peter is made to say, 'Oh, damn your sentiment!' How unsuited this is to the situation is seen when we find that Sir Peter had just angrily called him 'a villain,' and had 'left him to his conscience.' But such a bit of 'fat' is too precious to be lost, and, it must be admitted, tells.

The praises of the critics were unbounded, as well they might be. He had united the easy dialogue of Cibber, the humour and truth of Vanbrugh, the wit and pleasantry of Congreve. The dialogue was declared to be 'easy, engaging, witty, abounding in strokes of pointed satire, and enriched by a vein of humour.

But objection was justly taken to the elaborate 'wit-traps,' where the author spoke in his own person rather than in that of his characters. This was an evidence of exhaustion, for in 'The Rivals' every-one talks according to his character, and as he would in real life. It might seem that Sir Peter was but Sir Anthony carried on into a fresh play—an impression owing to the fashion of playing the character insisted on by the actors. Were he presented as an elderly, not an old man—which the author intended—the shades of distinction would be strongly marked. The actors will infuse testiness and crabbedness.

As in music, so in the drama, there are *keys* and measures; some bright and fresh, some lively and sombre. 'The Rivals' is in a gay good-humoured key, much the same as that of 'She Stoops to Conquer,' which has *nearly* the same popularity. Goldsmith's play is, of course, of far higher finish and pretension—the characters are more original. That of young Marlow is one of the most exquisitely drawn of rakes, and the humour is 'easy, natural, affecting.' Irishmen have contributed abundant troubles and perplexities to the common stock of public annoyance; but these have been somewhat counterbalanced by enriching the general stock of harmless enjoyment by these admirable pieces.

# CHAPTER XII.

## TOM SHERIDAN.

When Sheridan was being followed in state to his resting-place in Westminster, his son Tom was far away at the Cape of Good Hope, filling an unpretending office worth £1,000 a year, which his overwhelming difficulties had compelled him to accept. He was not destined to enjoy it long, for he had set out in shattered health, and was to follow his father to the grave within a few months.

The story of this brilliant son of a brilliant father is a melancholy one. Strange to say, with such a reputation, little is to be found to support it, beyond a few humorous sayings, and the general testimony of friends and contemporaries to his gaiety and amiability. But it is not generally known or accepted that with such gifts he united an earnestness of purpose and a taste for the serious concerns of life; and it seems likely that had he not been hampered and checked by his erratic father, whose irreclaimable extravagance frustrated all his sober attempts, he might have made a really respectable

figure. As it is, there is something touching in his vain efforts to bring order into what was hopeless chaos; he, at last, had to give up the attempt in despair, and allow the confusion to grow worse confounded. His gifted daughter, the late Mrs. Norton, once delivered a protest against repeating the stories of her grandfather's carelessness and extravagance, as though they were inventions or exaggerations; but his behaviour to his favourite son sets him in no favourable light, for he was responsible for the wreck of a fine character, and what might have turned out a meritorious career.

To the reader, the image of father and son forms a pleasant passage in social life. They generally appear in lively intercourse, dealing out smart repartees. We regard Tom Sheridan with indulgent partiality, much as people do some off-hand good-humoured youth, met but once or twice, who has left the impression that we should like to know more of him—to see him again. As we listen and smile, how happy, we think, must have been the pair, how proud the father of his promising child, how certain to advance him in life! And for the son, how he must have looked for guidance to the celebrated parent! The immortal, oft-quoted reply to the threat of being 'cut off with a shilling,' may have been the foundation of the reputation of the youth. This seems to be slight literary 'baggage' enough to be forwarded to posterity, or upon

which to build a reputation. Such 'squibs' would give but a poor and unreal idea of the true state of things.

There was much more in 'Tom' then these trifles would indicate, and it will be seen that his blemishes were the natural result of ill-training and lack of good example, and of the erratic manner in which he was brought up. There was in him a vein of seriousness which he inherited from his gifted mother, with a turn for business which only needed encouragement and direction.

It was a bizarre circumstance that he should have come into the world on the day that his father's play of 'The School for Scandal' was produced. This should have been a happy omen. This auspicious day, as we have seen, was March 17, 1775. Of his childhood we know little, save that he was lively and precocious. Angelo, the dancing-master, an intimate friend of the family, describes him as an engaging lad. 'He was,' he says, 'a great favourite of my mother. At that time my father had his riding-house. We have often had him for days with us. He could not then have been more than eight years old, yet his manners were so insinuating that everybody was pleased with him. . . . . After his mother's death we seldom saw him; but when arrived at manhood we often met at convivial parties, and the recollection of our family, the notice I formerly took of him, the visits

we used to pay to the pastrycooks, always procured me a welcome with a cordial shake of the hand.'

Very early he was sent to Harrow, where he was placed under the same master who had directed his father's studies, viz., Dr. Parr, who seems to have been very partial to his charge. But he did not remain long with him, and from a characteristic passage in one of the doctor's letters, his withdrawal seems to have been connected with the usual difficulty which beset Sheridan's undertakings, when, as Mr. Dickens sen. used to say, 'the bandogs would shortly have him at bay.' 'The boy,' he writes, 'said something about drawing on your banker; but I do not understand the process, and shall not take any step. You will consult your own convenience about these things; for my connection with you is that of friendship and personal regard. But,' added the friendly doctor, 'if you choose Tom to return, he knows and you know how glad I am always to see him. If not, pray let him do something, and I will tell you what he should do.'*

On his return home he was much associated with a very unsuitable guide, his uncle Ozias Linley, an eccentric being, whose opinions were of a sceptical kind. With this relation he engaged in meta-

* Sheridan, it is known, was ever superstitious, having a wholesome dread of doing anything upon a Friday—or upon any other day, his malicious friends would say. When his boy was with Dr. Parr, he dreamt that he had fallen from an apple-tree, and next morning sent for him at once.

physical discussions, and from him he picked up some theories and difficulties with which he used sometimes to encounter his father. The latter heartily disliked such notions, and it must be said in his favour that he was always orthodox in his views. A characteristic, pleasant story is recorded of one of these little encounters. 'Tom one day,' says his tutor, 'tried to discuss with his father the doctrine of necessity. "Pray, father," said he, "did you ever do anything in a state of perfect indifference; without motive, I mean, of some kind or other?" Sheridan, who saw what was coming, and by no means relished such subjects, from Tom or anyone else, said: "Yes, certainly." "Indeed," said Tom. "Yes, indeed." "What! total indifference—total, entire, thorough indifference?" "Yes—-total, entire, thorough indifference." "Then tell me, my dear father, what it is you can do with total, entire, thorough indifference?" The readiness of the parent did not desert him. "Why, listen to you, Tom."'

The father, however, soon felt that this mode of education would not be beneficial for his son, and resolved to have a tutor to prepare him for the University. We have seen what characteristic incidents attended the engagement of Mr. Smyth, who was selected for this office. He describes Tom's appearance at this time: 'The son appeared after dinner—a fine youth with sallow complexion and

dark hair, with a quick intelligent look and lively manner; but he was impatient to shoot swallows that were seen flitting about the river, and he soon left us.'

It was remarked, too, what a strong likeness he bore to his beautiful mother, his face having that peculiar thoughtful look which is to be seen in the Gainsborough portrait at Dulwich. The tutor, however, soon found that he could do little with his pupil. Sir Walter Scott seems to have been told by him, and was much amused by the idea, that 'it was impossible to put knowledge into him, try as you might.' 'Just,' added Sir Walter, 'like a trunk that you are trying to overpack. But it won't do—the things start out in your face.'

The tutor, as we have seen, had a troubled course during his brief period of superintendence, having more difficulty with the erratic father than with the son, part of which arose from a morbid feverish display of affection for his offspring, which was annoying and fatiguing to all concerned. Boswell tells a story of a father who was worrying everyone with his anxieties as to the condition of his boy, then at school at Eton. He was ill—he was sure he was dying, etc. At last some one suggested, 'Can't you take a post-chaise and go and see him?' There is a scene dramatically described by the tutor which exhibits Sheridan in this nervously affectionate mood.*

* See vol. i., p. 401.

His tutor went with him to Cambridge. But the youth seems to have done literally nothing. 'There was, alas! only,' said the tutor, 'great expense, and the destruction of all my schemes for his instruction. He was the idol of the young men, who pronounced him the cleverest fellow in the place, as in point of fun and humour he certainly was. I no longer saw him in the evenings. I made out how often he had been in Hall by the number of times he had been fined; for, like his father, he was always too late. As a pupil he was from the first a constant source of alternate hope and disappointment—"equal to all things—for all things unfit." To the last he realized what Dr. Parr said of him as a boy—"great acuteness, excellent wit and humour, but not a particle of understanding."'

On leaving his father, Sheridan, in his own style, thus summed up his son's prospects and capacity: 'Tom,' he said, 'you have genius enough to get a dinner every day in the week at the first tables in London; and *that is something*. But that is all; you can go no further.' In conscience he ought to have added, 'And of this state of things I am the cause.'

On leaving college it was determined to place him in the army, and he was presently given a commission in a 'crack' regiment, an injudicious stimulant to extravagance. One of his father's

many friends of influence was Lord Moira, then commanding in Scotland, who placed him on his staff at Edinburgh.

Here he associated with all the convivial *beaux esprits* of that city; and Mr. Jerdan, who was living there at the time, was particularly impressed with his delightful social gifts, and describes the roystering songs he would compose and sing.

'One of his compositions on the disbanding of the army was an amusing specimen. I can still recollect two verses: after disposing of the higher ranks—

'Says the captain, "I'll go home
Where my wife and children cry;"
Says the lieutenant, "I'll to my lass,
For the devil a wife have I."

'Says the sergeant, "I'll to the highway,
Better do that than do worse;"
Says the corporal, "I'll go too . . .
So stand and deliver your purse!"'*

Like his father, he had ever a turn for songs and verses of this kind; and we find him later addressing his friend Dibdin in this impromptu strain:

'Dear Dibdin,—Having broke my fast,
I'll fully break my mind:
You promised me
A song, d'ye see,
Which I thought very kind;

* This seems to confirm his authorship of the comic opera which was found in Lamb's handwriting by Mr. Patmore, and in which this song is introduced.

But promises like pie-crusts last,
And folly 'tis to trust :
A song without the words is like
A pie without a crust.
'With my tooralu tooralu.
'T. SHERIDAN.'

'He was gay, honest, jolly, and sincere,' said one of his intimates. 'At every gala or rout in town a good singer, dancer, boxer, and drinker.' And one of his friends declared enthusiastically, 'You might drink with Tom in the dark'—an encomium supported by his own favourite test of constancy to the bottle : '*If you are able to go, you are able to stay*' —a sentiment in the spirit of his father's humour. These, however, as Mr. Moore might plead, are fascinating but fatal gifts.

Lord Moira lived in one of the old stately Edinburgh mansions belonging to Lord Wemyss ; and, it is said, found his household economy much disordered by the irregular hours kept by his aide-de-camp. A story was told of his good-humoured tolerance, and of the irresistible gaiety of Tom in deprecating a reproof. One night Lord Moira determined to give him a lesson, and sat up himself to let him in. Not until nearly dawn did 'Tom' present himself, and was much confused at confronting the owner of the mansion, who opened the door to him in person. 'Great news !' cried the truant, after a time. There was an expectation that his chief would be sent as Lord Lieutenant to Ireland.

'What!' said the other eagerly, and thrown off his guard. 'I am appointed Lord Lieutenant, and you Chief Secretary!' which produced a hearty laugh and forgiveness. Mr. Sheridan came down to Edinburgh on a visit to Lord Moira; and, as may be conceived, was welcomed cordially in the different parts of Scotland that he visited.

This was about the year 1805. Unfortunately Tom's gay temperament was to lead him into more serious difficulties, such as an adventure which brought him into the courts of law, when damages of £1,500 were obtained against him. He now became acquainted with Miss Caroline Callender, daughter of Colonel Callender and of Lady Elizabeth McDonnell, of the Antrim family. He succeeded in winning the affections of this young lady, who possessed great personal charms, and the marriage took place in June, 1805.

The interesting pair spent their honeymoon in Scotland, and were invited to many distinguished houses. 'The agreeable and always welcome "Monk" Lewis found himself at Inverary Castle, during festivities given for the Duke's birthday. Here were a number of lively persons of congenial dispositions, and among others Mr. Sheridan and his bride. It struck him that marriage had not as yet "steadied" the gay son of Brinsley.

'"I am very regular," writes Mr. Lewis to his mother, "in my mode of life, compared to most of

the other inhabitants of the castle ; for many of them do not go to bed till between six and seven ; and between four and five in the morning is the time generally selected as being most convenient for playing at billiards. The other morning I happened to wake about six o'clock, and hearing the billiard-balls in motion, I put on my dressing-gown, and went into the gallery, from whence, looking down into the great hall, I descried Tom Sheridan and Mr. Chester (who had not been in bed all night) playing with great eagerness. Fortunately, Tom was in the act of making a stroke on which the fate of the whole game depended ; when I shouted to him over the balustrade, 'Shame ! shame ! a married man !' on which he started back in a fright, missed his stroke, and lost the game.

'"Mrs. T. Sheridan is also here at present, very pretty, very sensible, amiable and gentle ; indeed, so gentle that Tom insists upon it that her extreme quietness and tranquillity is a defect in her character. Above all, he accuses her of such an extreme apprehension of giving trouble (he says), it amounts to absolute affectation. He affirms that when the cook has forgotten her duty, and no dinner is prepared, Mrs. Sheridan says, 'Oh ! pray don't get dinner on purpose for me ; I'll take a dish of tea instead ;' and he declares himself certain, that if she were to set her clothes on fire, she would step to the bell very quietly, and say to the servant, with great gentleness

and composure, 'Pray, William, is there any water in the house?' 'No, madam; but I can soon get some.' 'Oh dear no! it does not signify; I dare say the fire will go out of itself!'"'

It was on the occasion of this marriage—an imprudent one, as his father thought—that Tom's well-known reply to his threat that 'he would cut him off with a shilling' was uttered. 'You haven't got it about you, have you, sir?' Of this there have been various versions; but the above is the wittiest, as well as the most authentic.* Many of these family jests are repeated, such as that of his wishing to go down a coal-mine for the satisfaction of being able to say that he had done so. 'Then can't you say so without going?' was the father's reply.

These things have found their way into the various 'Joe Miller' collections, and seem hackneyed. Better, however, is the story of the son's coming to the father with the demand, 'Money I must have!' 'Then take that pair of pistols,' said the father, 'and mount your horse. The night is dark, and

* It was said, too, that so displeased was Sheridan that he would not speak to or see his son. The Prince good-naturedly invited him to dine, and he found Tom opposite to him. The Prince made a speech, as he was fond of doing on solemn occasions: 'I implore you to shake hands and bury the past in oblivion.' Sheridan thanked him, said that he had received great provocation, that he had actually altered his will and cut his son off with a shilling. Tom, while begging his forgiveness, could not resist saying that 'he was glad he was on credit again, as he must have borrowed that sum.'

Hounslow Heath is not far off.' 'I tried that,' said his ready son, 'and unluckily stopped your treasurer, Peake, who said that you had been beforehand with me, and robbed him of every shilling.'

This *gaieté de cœur* was shown in many ways, and one of Tom's adventures is told by Theodore Hook in the novel of 'Gilbert Gurney':

'He was staying at Lord Craven's at Benham (or rather Hampstead), and one day proceeded on a shooting excursion, like Hawthorn, with only his "dog and his gun," on foot, and unattended by companion or keeper; the sport was bad, the birds few and shy—and he walked and walked in search of game, until, unconsciously, he entered the demesne of some neighbouring squire. A very short time after, he perceived advancing towards him, at the top of his speed, a jolly, comfortable gentleman, followed by a servant, armed, as it appeared, for conflict. Tom took up a position, and waited the approach of the enemy. "Hallo! you sir," said the squire, when within half-earshot; "what are you doing here, sir, eh?" "I'm shooting, sir," said Tom. "Do you know where you are, sir?" said the squire. "I'm here, sir," said Tom. "Here, sir?" said the squire, growing angry; "and do you know where here is, sir?—these, sir, are my manors; what d'ye think of that, sir, eh?" "Why, sir, as to your manners," said Tom, "I can't say they seem over-agreeable." "I don't want any jokes, sir," said the squire; "I

hate jokes. Who are you, sir?—what are you?" "Why, sir," said Tom, "my name is Sheridan—I am staying at Lord Craven's—I have come out for some sport—I have not had any, and I am not aware that I am trespassing." "Sheridan!" said the squire, cooling a little—"oh! from Lord Craven's, eh? Well, sir, I could not know that, sir—I——" "No, sir," said Tom; "but you need not have been in a passion." "Not in a passion, Mr. Sheridan!" said the squire; "if you were in my place, I should like to know what you would say." "Why, sir," said Tom, "if I were in your place, under the circumstances, I should say—I am convinced, Mr. Sheridan, you did not mean to annoy me, and as you look a good deal tired, perhaps you'll come up to my house and take some refreshment." The squire was amused by this nonchalance, and, it is needless to add, acted upon Sheridan's suggestion.'*

* 'So far,' said poor Tom, 'the story tells for me; now you shall hear the sequel.' After having regaled himself at the squire's house, and having said five hundred more good things than he swallowed; having delighted his host, and having half won the hearts of his wife and daughters, the sportsman proceeded on his return homewards. In the course of a walk, he passed through a farmyard; in the front of the farmhouse was a green, in the centre of which was a pond; in the pond were many ducks swimming and diving. Accordingly, up he goes to the farmer, and accosts him very civilly. 'My good friend,' says Tom, 'I make you an offer.' 'Of what, sur?' says the farmer. 'Why,' replies Tom, 'I've been out all day fagging after birds, and

On 'settling down' after his marriage, the newspapers announced that 'a beautiful villa near Tunbridge Wells, belonging to the late Mrs. Byng,' had been purchased by Mr. Thomas Sheridan; which seems an imprudent step.

He had now left the army, and come to settle in London, when his father thought he could be useful to him in the theatre, installing him as a

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haven't had a shot. Now, both my barrels are loaded—I should like to take home something; what shall I give you to let me have a shot with each barrel at those ducks and fowls—I standing here—and to have whatever I kill?' 'What sort of a shot are you?' said the farmer. 'Fairish!' said Tom, 'fairish!' 'And to have all you kill?' said the farmer, 'eh?' 'Exactly so,' said Tom. 'Half a guinea,' said the farmer. 'That's too much,' said Tom. 'I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll give you a seven-shilling piece, which happens to be all the money I have in my pocket.' 'Well,' said the man, 'hand it over.' The payment was made. Tom took his post by the barn-door, and let fly with one barrel, and then with the other, and such quacking and splashing, and screaming and fluttering, had never been seen or heard in that place before. Away ran Tom, and, delighted at his success, picked up first a hen, then a chicken, then fished out a dying duck or two, and so on, until he numbered eight head of domestic game, with which his bag was nobly distended. 'Those were right good shots, sur,' said the farmer. 'Yes,' said Tom, 'eight ducks and fowls were more than you bargained for, old fellow—worth rather more, I suspect, than ten shillings—eh?' 'Why, yes,' said the man, scratching his head, 'I think they be; but what do I care for that? they are none of them mine!' 'Here,' said Tom, 'I was for once in my life beaten, and made off as fast as I could, for fear the right owner of my game might make his appearance—not but that I could have given the fellow that took me in seven times as much as I did, for his cunning and coolness.'

sort of assistant manager. Unfortunately this duty led him to acquaintance with the fast clubs and extravagant men about town, and worse still, helped him to contract a taste for the fashionable vice of gaming. Mr. Raikes, in his lively records, describes a scene at Watier's Club, after he had been gambling during the whole night, and 'stripped of everything; in which state Mr. Brummell found him, sitting ruefully, and with his last stake before him. The good-natured Beau, who was at that time in luck, offered to "take the box," and to join their fortunes; and then sat down to play for both. He had very soon won a sum of over a thousand pounds, and stopping at the right moment, divided the winnings, saying, in his rough way, "Now, Tom, go home to your wife and brats, and never touch a card again." This is a pleasant trait.

The curious extravagance of father and son is illustrated by the fact that sometimes when both were invited to the same country house, they would arrive in separate chaises.

Of course, from the promising son of a clever father much was expected; and it was determined that he should be brought into Parliament. During his life he made two attempts to obtain a seat, but was each time unlucky. He stood for Liskeard, opposing Mr. Huskisson, when on the declaration of the poll an odd state of confusion resulted, owing to the Mayor and Sub-Sheriff both claiming

to make the return. The former returned Mr. Huskisson, and the latter Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan polled only a few votes, but the Sub-Sheriff took the extraordinary course of sending up a return of his own to the effect that the 'election was doubtful,' and that 'Tom' was entitled to the seat. Hence petitions from both candidates were presented to the House, Mr. Sheridan pressing that of his son; and a warm discussion followed, in which Mr. Dundas reprehended the proceeding in severe language as a discreditable transaction. It was on this discussion that Sheridan retorted on him his former profession of the law, which brought on him a bitter castigation from Dundas, who declared that 'if he made such allusions in future he would give such an *exposé* of his antagonist's previous life and pursuits as would be very unacceptable to him, concluding with the remark that he was certain that it was not Mr. Thomas Sheridan who was accountable, but that in the whole transaction he saw the hand of his father.' After some further delay Mr. Huskisson was declared the member, and the Sheriff was committed to Newgate. The proceeding was a very singular one, and it would seem that there had been some *tracasserie*.

It must have been on this occasion that there occurred one of the usual interchanges of jests between the father and son. 'The two Sheridans,' says Kelly, 'were supping with me one night after

the opera, at a period when Tom expected to get into Parliament. "I think, father," said he, "that many men, who are called great patriots in the House of Commons, are great humbugs. For my own part, if I get into Parliament, I will pledge myself to no party, but write upon my forehead in legible characters, 'To be let.'" "And under that, Tom," said his father, "write—'Unfurnished.'"'

One of the pleasantest of Sheridan's sayings was uttered in the presence of his son. A crash as of something falling was heard outside the dining-room door: 'You rascal, you have broken all the plates,' said Mr. Peter Moore. 'No, sir, there is nothing broken.' 'And have you made all that noise for nothing?' said the father. Again, on Tom's pressing for some money: 'Don't I allow you £800 a year?' said the father angrily. 'Allow it, yes,' said Tom; 'but it is never paid.'

Tom's social character, it was admitted, was one of general gaiety, shown by light and pleasant speeches. Thus he was fond of protesting against the hackneyed conventionalities of society, and particularly against what he styled 'the curious customs of the county of Middlesex.' He used to say also, in reference to the provoking way in which ideas are anticipated, that 'a thought went sometimes *walking about* the world, and lodged in several people's heads in such quick succession, that these were sure to quarrel in the end as to who gave it house-room

first.' A quaint and rather original way of putting his point.

The cost of this election contest could be ill afforded by the candidate. But the Regent, always partial to 'Tom,' on this occasion displayed true kindness and even generosity. Learning that his friend, besides losing the seat, was seriously crippled in his means, he directed one of his confidential friends to go to Mr. Carpenter, one of the chief creditors, stating that the Prince was much pained at his being inconvenienced, and proposing that as his Royal Highness could not pay down the money, he should take an annuity of a hundred pounds, which was accepted. It was, indeed, natural that this cordial appreciator of wit and social gifts should have been attracted by the mercurial and good-hearted 'Tom,' to whom everyone was well inclined.

To the same interest he perhaps owed the offer of the good place of Registrar of the Admiralty Court at Malta, which during the war was profitable. This expatriation might have saved him, restored his health, and given him back to an orderly life. But, as we have seen, Sheridan was afraid it might compromise his independence. Fox sensibly urged that Lord St. Vincent's offer should be accepted. But the party were violent against it, as Mr. Rogers heard, and prevailed. Mrs. Sheridan, however, approved the rejection. She was always attached

to her stepson, and spoke of him with much affection. 'I trust,' she wrote to her husband on this occasion, 'that you will be able to do something positive for Tom about money. I am willing to make any sacrifice in the world for that purpose, or to live in any way whatever. Whatever he has now ought to be certain, or how,' added this sensible lady, 'will he know how to regulate his expenses?' This feeling she seems to have ever entertained towards him. Indeed, he seems to have left the same impression on all. In spite of his defects, all agree that 'Tom' was thoroughly '*bon enfant*,' and affectionate to his friends. In an old autograph catalogue, where curious touches of character are often revealed, is found this testimony to his merits. George Colman the younger, in 1810, was confined in the debtor's prison, and 'Tom' Sheridan, then in failing health, had shown that he had thought of his friend. In this unpublished scrap Colman writes: 'Among *the numerous instances of poor Tom Sheridan's great good-nature*, I reckon his attempts to seduce you to visit me in these abominable precincts, where I am an unwilling inhabitant.' Colman was much concerned for his state, and doubted if he (Tom) would recover.

Mr. Creevy used to say that Sheridan had implored the Prince to give the lucrative place of Receiver of the Duchy to his son; and had seen him actually shedding tears while entreating the

Prince to comply with his wish. Later, however, he obtained it for himself.

'The fate of this promising young man,' as Mr. Moore says, 'was peculiarly tantalizing.' He had been brought up to the fairest expectations, all which he saw disappear, 'leaving difficulty and disappointment to be his only inheritance. His popularity in society was unbounded; but he knew how to attack as well as to amuse: and though living chiefly with that class of persons who pass over the surface of life, like Camilla, without leaving any enduring impressions behind, he had manly and intelligent qualities. There are few whose lives have been so gay and thoughtless, whom so many remember with cordiality and interest.'

The partiality of his stepmother shows that there must have been something engaging and affectionate in his disposition. When 'all the talents' went out of office, and the father lost his place, the son was equally unfortunate, losing his appointment as 'Muster-master-general,' which his father had procured for him. Failing these resources, he now applied himself to the concerns of the unfortunate theatre. For these duties he seemed scarcely qualified, yet we find that he really brought to his office much industry and capability, and endeavoured to evolve some order out of the hopeless chaos. On him was now cast all the routine drudgery, the preparation of plays, and, above all, the confronting the

pecuniary embarrassments of the house. Among the duties which he discharged conscientiously was the examination and revision of the countless new plays sent in, many of which he reshaped and re-copied. This has led to the belief that they were of his own composition, and one or two may have been actually written by himself.

Kelly, his friend, bears this favourable testimony to Tom Sheridan's conduct: 'I had the pleasure of living on terms of intimacy with him; and many a time, when he used to come to town from Cambridge with his friend, Mr. Berkeley Craven, have they favoured me with their company. Tom Sheridan did not "ape his sire" in all things, for whenever he made an appointment, he was punctuality personified. In every transaction I had with him, I always found him uniformly correct; nor did he unfrequently lament his father's indolence and want of regularity, although he had (indeed naturally) a high veneration for his talents. He had a good voice, and true taste for music, which, added to his intellectual qualities and superior accomplishments, caused his society to be sought with the greatest avidity.' It is interesting to find that at one time he had called in the aid of no less a person than Charles Lamb; and a play, which is to be seen in the British Museum, in Lamb's handwriting, it has been assumed, was the work of Elia himself, and has been printed as such in one of his collected editions.

Mary Lamb, writing to a friend, mentions that her brother was engaged with 'Tom' Sheridan on what she calls 'A Speaking Pantomime,' referring to this particular work. But it is evident from the composition itself that Lamb did little more than revise or add touches, for nothing of it betrays his peculiar manner or ideas.*

Unfortunately the miseries of his situation were now intensified. His health began to fail, and he had to make distant expeditions to Sicily and other places to recover strength, for he inherited consumption from his mother. As the father became more embarrassed, the situation of the son, burdened with the charge of a wife and family, became worse than his. On the worthy treasurer fell the duty—never ending—of providing for the wants of both. As we have seen, the father grew more and more hopelessly involved, and with his involvement that complete engrossment in himself and in his pleasures seemed to increase. His indifference to and neglect of the claims of others was extended to his son's necessities, of which, it would appear, he at last took no notice whatever. 'Dear Dickey,' writes Tom to

* There are many plays in the Museum in the autograph of Sheridan and his son—the works of others copied out and prepared for representation. In that of the father, a piece styled a fairy opera; 'The Cobbler of Preston,' 1798; 'The Statesman,' 1782: in that of the son: 'The Untutored Savage,' a farce, 1797; 'The Strolling Company,' etc. There are also many plays noted in pencil in the handwriting of both.

the treasurer, 'if you can possibly, send me ten or twenty pounds. I have not been master of a guinea since I came to town, and wherever I turn myself I am disgraced. To my father it is vain to apply. He is mad, and so shall I be if I don't hear from you.'

When the theatre was burned down, his situation became critical indeed; and it must be said that under cruel neglect and provocation he showed a truly filial patience and amiability. He thought the hiring of the Lyceum a foolish step; but it was useless, he felt, to oppose it, 'for no man can be with my father and retain a judgment of his own.' He begged Peake to tell his father ('for I will not again write to him') that he was anxious to settle something as to his quarter share. 'Should anything befall me, my wife and family would be entitled to £225 a year. At present the Carpenters are taking £200 a year from it; the £25 is all I receive from it. I have no hope,' he adds resignedly, 'that he will attend to this.'

As to the discussions on the contending claims of the various parties interested in the new theatre, 'Tom' saw clearly how his father was looking to his own interests. Yet his amiable disposition prompted him to accept passively, and with a sort of resignation, what he considered harsh and unfair treatment.

'I never wished or expected, or thought it just I should, that the income to be derived from the theatre was to be enjoyed by anyone but himself,

except in such proportions as he thought right. But with all its difficulties, I still looked forward to its becoming an independence for my children, if not for myself.

'Under the present circumstances what will happen? Say I receive a liberal price for my quarter and my father does the same, is there a moment's hope that in whatever shape that price is paid, by annuity or otherwise, it will remain his property? You know it is out of the question, and I certainly consider this abandonment of a property altogether as an unjust and unnecessary measure. My father dare not face the compromise which must be made with the creditors. The funds from which Mrs. Sheridan's jointure were drawn, whatever face they may bear, are ultimately to be traced . . . with much besides which he is endeavouring to conceal, though in no way discreditable to him, otherwise than by showing how distressed a man he was, *when he did not wish to be thought so.* How often has he said, "I am going to make the whole over to Tom;" how often have I said to myself, "Never!" The very mode by which this company were to build and enrich themselves, I might have adopted; but then I conceived there was a chance of his character being compromised if his son sought to pay a dividend for his father's debt. And where is the difference? Added to this, my father has, I grieve for it, *a jealousy of me, which is as unjust as it*

*is unnatural. No step I ever took in my life, that was a semblance of an attempt at independence, but he has not taken alarm at.* Why would he not let me make an effort when I might? The trustees are afraid of him; they feel he has resources and talents which they cannot encounter, and they wish to get rid of him. Me they think they can manage and should have liked to contend with, were I inclined to oppose. But why should there have been any difference? Had he consented to make the theatre over to me, it would have been rebuilt now. But it never was his intention. *He is never frank, never confidential with me; and since he will not deign to give me his advice, he must not be surprised if I follow my own.'**

In this characteristic protest there is a despairing tone, with evidence of a warm affectionate heart, which would have been filial, loving, and faithful under all treatment. It raises our opinion of this genial man.

When his connection with the theatre had terminated for ever, Tom seems to disappear from view, and no doubt had to pass through a period of painful struggle. We do not find associated with his name any of those ingenious arts of extrication which stood his sire in such stead. He had, however, much the same buoyancy of temperament, and when the series of Westminster elections came

* MS. Brit. Mus

round, both father and son re-appeared, full of their old spirit and energy. In the contest of ridicule with Mr. Paull, 'the tailor,' Tom appeared on the hustings, making speeches ridiculing their antagonist, so that his father declared, in a rather foolish burst, 'Let me only be known to posterity as the father of Tom Sheridan!'

'Tom' himself was despatched to Stafford, to stand for that borough, but met with an almost hostile reception. After this joint failure the career of father and son may be said to have closed—closed in trouble and hopelessness. We have seen Sheridan taking his lonely walks in the lanes about Leatherhead—walking from himself, indeed, and the thoughts of his ruined hopes. Kind friends, however, did not abandon Tom, and a post was found for him, no doubt by his royal patron's intervention, at the Cape of Good Hope. It is curious that within a few years three brilliant men were thus sent away—Tom Moore, Theodore Hook, and Tom Sheridan. The place obtained for Sheridan was that of Colonial Paymaster, with a salary of £1,200 a year. On his departure the Regent sent for him to take leave, and, with many kindly words and good wishes, is said to have given him a handsome present. But he was in wretched health, and must have had the seeds of death in him. His old friend Angelo met him just before he embarked, and was struck by his sickly worn face. He said to him, 'Angelo,

my old friend, I shall have but twenty months to live!' A sad presentiment, which was almost fulfilled. At the Cape he gained many friends by his genial social gifts. He died on September 12th, 1817, not many months after his gifted father. His remains were brought home. His widow and young children were left with slender resources. Thus passed away disastrously one of the bright engaging spirits of the age, who, under happier auspices, might have enjoyed a brilliant career.

Charles Sheridan, Richard Brinsley's other son, by a second marriage, is not nearly so well known as 'Tom.' He was born in Hertford Street, on January 14th, 1796, and was sent to Winchester School, where he obtained the gold medal for English verse. He afterwards entered Trinity College, Cambridge, 'with an expectation of abilities,' but a distaste to the study of mathematics pursued there caused his withdrawal; the death of his mother, who left a substantial fortune, placed him in a position of independence. As a chronicler informs us, 'this, joined, it must be confessed, to some want of steady application, stifled all exertion.' He was fond of travelling abroad, and found his way to Greece, whose language he studied. Imbibing a horror of the Turks, he contributed to the list of the family authors by writing some translations, 'Songs of Greece.' He died November 29th, 1844.

# CHAPTER XIII.

## MRS. NORTON.

When Mr. Thomas Sheridan closed his short and troubled career, far away from his home, he left a widow and six children, whose situation seemed hopeless indeed. He had enjoyed his office too short a time to make any provision for his family, and their immediate relatives at home, from whom they might have received assistance, were, by a curious fatality, to be speedily removed by death. Mrs. Sheridan, however, was a person of much character and energy, and gallantly confronting her difficulties, devoted herself to restoring the fortunes of her little family, with what success will now be seen.

She returned to England almost at once, and entered on a life of seclusion, from which she never departed, save when the interest of her children demanded that they should see the world. This admirable mother lived long after the happy and even brilliant establishment of her daughters. Having 'brought them out,' as it is called, she

sought her retirement again, so soon as she had fulfilled these maternal duties. 'We know,' says one of her friends, 'hers to have been a life marked by earnestness, energy, and self-sacrifice, as by wit and genius.' She had some taste for authorship, and published some novels, one called 'Carwell,' a story 'with a purpose,' in illustration of the inequalities of punishment in the case of forgery—an odd subject, but showing that she was of a thoughtful cast of mind.*

Here we might find further illustration of the interesting subject of discussion alluded to at the opening of these volumes—the influence of race on character. The Irish blood, already diluted with English, we now find commingled with Scotch, with the result that the original Sheridan 'strain' still endures, but rather fined away. The vein of broad comedy now takes the shape of a lighter and airier wit or repartee, while something of the fitful erratic temperament is still found.

About the year 1830 we see the beautiful widow established with her three attractive daughters in a tiny mansion in Great George Street, a few doors from Story's Gate. Here she was bringing them 'out,' and gathering about her a circle of appreciative friends, the lively spirit and beauty of the young girls crowding their small drawing-room with wits

* She died, June 9, 1851, at the house of her daughter, Lady Dufferin, No. 39, Grosvenor Square.

THE DUCHESS OF SOMERSET.

*in a fancy costume as Queen of Beauty.*

London. Richard Bentley & Son. 1886.

and politicians—among others Sydney Smith and Theodore Hook. The hostess, it was said, might have been taken for the sister of her own daughters. Here it was that she was once so pleasantly rallied by Sydney Smith on the hero of her novel, 'Carwell,' who had committed the forgery. He knew her, he said, alluding to her maiden name, 'to be Callender, but not a Newgate calendar!'

It was in these rooms, shortly after one of the daughters' marriage to Mr. Norton, that a young and brilliant actress, then in the flush of first success, and who was the rage of the time, first saw the sisters, and gives a singularly effective sketch of their attractions.* This was the charming Fanny Kemble, who, uninstructed and untrained, had stepped on the stage from the schoolroom, and had rescued a great theatre from bankruptcy by her talent. Mrs. Kemble still lives to record those brilliant days, though nearly sixty years have since elapsed. Her features, limned by Sir Thomas Lawrence, show what her bright charm was at that time.

She describes how on many a night a host of distinguished persons would crowd into the small drawing-room, 'literally resplendent with the light of Sheridan beauty, male and female.' For there were to be seen the mother, more beautiful than anybody but her daughters; Lady Grahame, her

* 'Record of a Girlhood.' By Frances Anne Kemble. Bentley, 1859.

sister, as beautiful; Charles Sheridan, a youth worthy to be 'the younger brother of the Apollo Belvedere.' 'Certainly,' adds the actress, 'I never saw such a bunch of beautiful creatures all growing on one stem.' Fanny Kemble expressed her admiration to Mrs. Norton, and records her characteristic answer: 'Yes,' she said, looking round complacently, 'we *are* rather good-looking people!' Those who knew Mrs. Norton will remember that this was exactly in her 'style'—a quaint and happy frankness. 'Though not so handsome as her sisters, she produced a far more striking impression from her force of character, and the combination of those poetical gifts with which she was endowed, with the wit and power of repartee which they—particularly Lady Dufferin—possessed in common with her.'

Fanny Kemble was most attracted by the splendid charms of Caroline Sheridan, lately become Mrs. Norton. Like so many distinguished women, she had given so little promise of beauty as a child that her mother, 'who had a right to be exacting in such a point,' almost despaired. She, however, as she grew up, bloomed into a stately type of beauty—grandly classical. 'She was splendidly handsome, of an unEnglish character of beauty, her rather large and heavy features recalling the grandest Grecian and Italian models, to the latter of whom her rich colouring and blue-black braids of hair gave her an ad-

ditional resemblance.' Almost to the end of her life she retained this antique stateliness and classical air; and, recalling her at a far later period, I can bring before me with admiration her fine hair in 'massive tresses,' as the novelist puts it, and fine outline, as on a medallion.

Her impetuous spirit was to divert her life into troublous, stormy channels, from which her sisters kept aloof. Her undaunted bearing, which would not allow her to compromise with studied oppression and injury, was in contrast with their less decided natures and the remarkable sweetness of Lady Dufferin's temper.

Before the 'mind's eye' of Mrs. Kemble, writing in the character of 'an old woman,' there rose up many a curious scene. She describes one which took place at the house of Sir John Macdonald. Mrs. Norton came in late, and 'was met with a discreet quantity of mild chaff;' being 'too formidable an adversary to be challenged lightly. When Hook came up into the drawing-room with the gentlemen, he was called to the piano, and, having sung one song, was leaving it, but there was a unanimous call for another, on which Mrs. Norton, seating herself close to the instrument so that he could not leave it, 'in her most peculiar, deep, soft, contralto voice, which was like her beautiful dark face set to music, said: "I am going to sit here, and you shall not come away, for I shall keep you in like an iron crow."'

This was a good-humoured speech enough, but Mrs. Kemble presumes that there was some old heartburning on his side, as Mrs. Norton was sometimes reckless in the use of her wonderful wit and power of saying intolerably stinging things, for Hook, seizing on the phrase as a sort of refrain for his song, made every verse a covert satire on her and her social triumphs, bowing to her at the close with mock deference, and addressing her as 'My charming iron crow.' 'It was a relief,' Mrs. Kemble says, 'for all when he finished;' but Mrs. Norton, well trained in society, thanked him with a smile. Returning from church with Fanny Kemble next day, Mrs. Norton broke out about Hook—'his odious ill-nature and abominable coarseness, saying it was a shame that the Tories should receive such a man in society.' Miss Kemble suggested, in excuse, that his wit, no doubt, led him into these excesses. 'Wit!' exclaimed Mrs. Norton, her lip and nostril quivering, 'one may well be witty when one fears neither God nor devil!' 'She was extremely epigrammatic in her talk,' 'and comically dramatic in her manner of narrating things. I do not know whether she had any theatrical talent, though she sang pathetic and humorous songs admirably; and I remember shaking in my shoes when, soon after I came out, she told me she envied me, and would give anything to try the stage herself. . . . . She was no musician, but had a deep sweet contralto

voice, precisely the same in which she always spoke, and which, combined with her always lowered eyelids ("downy eyelids," with sweeping silken fringes), gave such incomparably comic effect to her sharp retorts and ludicrous stories. And she sang with great effect her own and Lady Dufferin's social satires, "Fanny Grey," and "Miss Myrtle;" and sentimental songs, such as "I Dreamt—'twas but a Dream"—of which the words were her own, and the music, which only amounted to a few chords, with the simplest modulations, her own also. . . .

'I remember she used occasionally to convulse her friends *en petit comité* with a certain absurd song called "The Widow," to all intents and purposes a piece of broad comedy, the whole story of which (the wooing of a disconsolate widow by a rich lover, whom she first rejects and then accepts) was comprised in a few words rather spoken than sung, eked out by a ludicrous burthen of "rum-ti-iddy, iddy-iddy-ido," which, by dint of her countenance and voice, conveyed all the alleviations of her first despair; her lover's fiery declamation; her virtuous indignation, and wrathful rejection of him; his cool acquiescence and intimation that his full purse assured him an easy acceptance in various other quarters; her rage and disappointment on his departure, and final relenting and consent on his return—all of which, with her "iddy-iddy-ido," she sang, or rather acted, with incomparable humour

and effect. I admired her extremely.' A vision of this gifted woman rises before Mrs. Kemble as she saw her once, arrayed in a rich gold-coloured silk, shaded and softened with black lace draperies, and her splendid head, neck, and arms adorned with magnificently simple Etruscan gold ornaments.

Her bold spirit was not displayed only in ready repartee or vivacious conversation, but was no doubt accountable for some of the trials of her life. In 1827 she had, as we have seen, married Mr. George Norton, a younger brother of Lord Grantley's, after a very slight acquaintance. He was a barrister in not very flourishing circumstances, whose disposition and character seem by general consent to have been disagreeable, and he was certainly unsuited to so clever and brilliant a woman. His friends, however, might urge that her rather independent nature might have been beyond the control of any man of ordinary type. The consequences were disastrous enough, and the disputes of the Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Norton for many years excited the interest and commiseration of the public, to whom they were freely communicated.

A very natural pleasing letter, furnished by the late Mr. Bates, in his amusing Maclise Gallery of portraits, leaves a good impression of the lady at her first setting out in married life, and shows that she was then domestic and even submissive. It is written from that solitary and desolate place of retirement,

Kingsgate, half-way between Ramsgate and Margate, and is dated July, 1831, four years after their marriage. It is addressed apparently to the nurse or governess of her child:

'DEAR MRS. MOORE,—I was very glad to get news of my darling, and I am thankful he is out of the poisonous smell of paint, which made me so ill I was forced to sleep at George Seymour's one night. There never was such a mess. But we are having the *nursery* done very nicely. We have changed the buff to stone-colour, which makes it less like a garret, and larger and lighter looking; and I have ordered the white press to have new panes in it where they are broken, and to be grained and varnished as nearly as possible like your drawers which it stands on . . . The green windows make the house look so dark that we are going to have the house painted to look like stone; the balcony carried out to the end of Mr. Furnivall's, and two little mock windows to match the store-room, which will make the house at least four feet larger in appearance. There are improvements for you! I trust in Heaven my little one will not have caught cold from the rain the night of your arrival, and that you have got comfortable lodgings. Tell me in your next letter more about them—whether they face the sea, and whether you have money enough; how Spencer liked the

steam-packet, and whether he has had any return of the relaxation and sickness, poor lamb! I miss him dreadfully, and am continually forgetting that he is not in the house, and listening for the little voice on the stairs.

'Mr. Norton still intends coming on Monday, but as he returns on Wednesday I think an hotel would be as cheap as lodgings, unless the person *you* are with could let us have a bedroom and sitting-room for the two nights, which is hardly worth while. Perhaps Mr. Norton will let me stay one week at Ramsgate: in that case, if we had a little sitting-room I could sleep with you, if your bed is a good size; or if they had a room with a single bed for *me*, we might eat our meals there, and have no sitting-room. Pray, dear old woman, ask about and get something low: I am sure if it is *cheap* Mr. Norton will let me stay the week, and I am so poisoned here that if I do not get a mouthful of fresh air, my little November baboon will be born with a green face. Try and manage this for me . . . The King is to sign the patent for Mr. Norton to be made honourable on Monday, and then it is to be hoped the *John Bull* paper will be satisfied. Mr. Norton is very glad, and Lord Melbourne has been very kind about it. Lord M—— is better, and offered me two tickets for the House of Lords on Tuesday to hear the King's speech. But I must come to my Too-too, who I hope will give me a ticket when *he*

is Lord Grantley. *There*, kiss your old mother, and send me a message in your next letter.'

Lord Melbourne was universally popular with men and women, for his general *bonhomie* and the amiability of his temper. He was, indeed, of the school of statesmen who brought toleration and good-nature into politics, in contrast to the personality and even spite which has unfortunately, in these latter days, become a feature of party strife. He was a friend and unbounded admirer of Sheridan in his decay, and was very intimate with his son Tom: a fact that should not be forgotten in connection with the painful incidents that occurred later. From this intercourse he had seriously meditated writing the life of Tom Sheridan's father—had collected materials, and had even written portions. But he had conceived a rather exalted idea of the task he had set himself, and prepared by a profound and elaborate system of studies for the fitting performance of his duty. He began by conscientiously going through the works of all the great orators of antiquity—Cicero, Demosthenes, with others of modern date; studies which he followed up by laborious perusal of all the old English writers of comedy and tragedy—Wycherley, Congreve, Massinger, and the rest. Some amusement as well as surprise was excited at Holland House, when he would recite long passages from Massinger, until it became

known that this was one of the fruits of this assiduous course of reading. As might be expected, he soon discovered that his view of Sheridan, either as orator or dramatist, received little assistance from comparison with these great models, which were, in truth, on a higher plane. He discovered also that a work on so ambitious and stately a scale was beyond his strength and powers of application. He soon relaxed and was glad to relinquish his task, which, indeed, was scarcely to his taste. This can be seen from the few specimens which Moore has incorporated with the 'Life,' and which are in the nature of somewhat arid disquisition.

Mrs. Norton tells us in her short essay in *Macmillan's Magazine*, written some twenty-five years ago, that when Lord Melbourne heard that Moore was undertaking to write the life of Sheridan he at once gave him all his materials, 'with that *bonhomie* and gay good-nature for which he was celebrated.' But he said later 'that he never regretted anything so much.'*

* It has already been shown under what a complexity of motives and distracting influences Moore carried out his task. He had before him evidence from private papers of the most abundant kind, of Sheridan's character, habits, and shiftiness; having likewise gathered from persons most fitted to know the truth, what was the general estimate of Sheridan among his friends and intimates. All this testimony, as we have seen on comparing his book with the private Diary, he put aside. His aim, apparently, was to present a sort of idealized Sheridan—engaged, like Fox, Windham, and others, in forwarding the objects and interests of

He had been a short time at the Home Office, Mr. McCullagh Torrens tells us, 'when he received a letter from this most beautiful and attractive of women, Mrs. Norton, asking an appointment for her husband, and gently pleading, as a claim to consideration, the illustrious memory of him who had once been the idol of the Whigs. Recollections of many a brilliant gathering at Melbourne House were awakened by the name—

> '"of the rare gifted man—
> The pride of the Senate, the bower, the hall;
> The orator, dramatist, minstrel, who ran
> Through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all!"

He answered her letter in person, and thus began an intimacy destined to produce much trouble and suffering.'

Mrs. Norton was at this time but five-and-twenty, and her visitor more than double her age; and finding in her society attraction and sympathy, he was too glad to be received on the easy footing of an old acquaintance, and soon on that of a valued

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his party. Above all, the 'party' itself was not to take detriment, or the susceptibilities of the leading Whigs to be hurt, by letting it be known that Sheridan had followed his own interests and caprices, or had worked with hostility against them. Again, their treatment of him had to be placed in as favourable a light as possible. Apart from these difficulties, the biographer naturally felt a lack of enthusiasm and even interest, owing to the fact that he had to work up a picture which did not correspond with the materials before him.

friend. Her request that her husband should receive some provision was not unreasonable or unbecoming, considering that it was made to her father's old and intimate friend. When the appointment of Divisional Magistrate and the Recordership of Guildford was obtained for Mr. Norton, the latter expressed much gratitude. But he presently began to neglect his duties, and murmurs and complaints were heard. He thought of replying in the *Times*, which seriously alarmed his patron. 'I should be annoyed,' he wrote to Mrs. Norton, 'at having a complaint made on this subject. Pray dissuade him from any public exhibition, and urge him gently to a little more activity in the morning. He might surely without difficulty get there by twelve o'clock. This is a disagreeable lecturing letter; but, still, upon matters to which it is necessary to pay some attention.' Mr. Norton, Lord Melbourne also complained, seemed to think 'he ought to have a voice in the selection of his companions on the bench;' that it was to be a sort of pleasant club; that 'he must have an agreeable fellow to walk with to or from the office.'

It is admitted on all hands that this was a most ill-omened alliance, the parties being incompatible in tastes, and, above all, in temper. The husband, during a long course of years, exhibited his defects to the public with such complete unreserve, that there can be no lack of charity in pronouncing him

to have been a remarkably unpleasant person. His proceedings were marked by a lack of restraint unsuitable in a magistrate, and which amazed and bewildered the town. Such has unhappily been the notoriety attending these matrimonial disputes, both husband and wife appealing periodically to the world to judge between them, that it is with no wish to revive old scandals, but rather to do some justice to an injured and high-spirited woman who suffered persecution for years, that it will become necessary to offer a vindication of her conduct through all these transactions.

One of the most interesting episodes of this period of Mrs. Norton's life was her first reception of a brilliant man, who had just returned from his travels, and was entering on political life. This was the young Mr. Disraeli, then attracting universal attention from his talent, vivacity, originality of conversation, and a self-confidence which caused amusement to older politicians. This assurance, it is now admitted, was not altogether due to juvenile vanity, and was more than justified by the event. His well-known vaunt, that the House, which received his maiden effort with ridicule, should one day be compelled to hear him, was no pettish outburst of disappointment, but arose out of a settled purpose, as is shown by his fixed resolve that nothing short of the highest office in the State would content his ambition. Once Mrs.

Norton was celebrating her brother's birthday, and had invited some of her husband's colleagues of the bench. Lord Melbourne and Mr. Disraeli were also of the party. Lord Melbourne was much attracted by the young man's conversation, who described his travels in a piquant and original fashion; and, as Mr. McCullagh Torrens heard the story, kindly said to him, 'Tell me now, what do you want to be?' To his surprise the other replied, 'I want to be Prime Minister,' on which Lord Melbourne gravely pointed out to him the difficulty and impossibility of looking to such a high destiny; there was no likelihood of an opening for a generation to come—'Stanley was certain to be the next Premier, and once in office would hold it for years,' and so on. This taking such a speech *au sérieux* was unlike Lord Melbourne; and Mr. Hayward, who was indefatigable in getting on the trail of a story, and also in 'cutting it to the bone'—his favourite phrase—took pains to obtain the true version from one of the survivors of the party—viz., Mr. Brinsley Sheridan, the brother in whose honour it was given. This gentleman thus recalled the conversation. Lord Melbourne had made some remarks about the East, when Mr. Disraeli said, 'Your lordship seems to have derived your notions of Eastern matters from the "Arabian Nights,"' to which rather flippant speech the Minister made the good-humoured reply, 'And a

devilish good place to get them from.' In the same happy spirit, when this young man declared that 'what he looked forward to was the Premiership,' was the answer, '*And I wish you may get it.*' This, Mr. Sheridan says, was the true version of what passed at Mrs. Norton's table. The whole seems to furnish a pleasant idea of the easy persiflage and gay light spirit of these meetings at Story's Gate.

In the agreeable letters of Lord Beaconsfield recently published, which display many happy touches combined with acute observation, we find how attracted the young traveller was by the clever sisters. He records, 'A brilliant reunion at Bulwer's, where was Mrs. Norton.' We find him going to the theatre with Mrs. Norton to see a new play of Sheridan Knowles's; or at a fancy-ball at the Hanover Square Rooms, where she and her sister, Mrs. Blackwood, appeared as 'beautiful Greeks.' In June, 1833, he dined with the St. Maurs, to meet Mrs. Sheridan—'an agreeable party, Lady Westmoreland, Mrs. Blackwood, Lord Clements, and Brinsley.' Lord St. Maur, he noted, had 'great talent, which develops itself in a domestic circle; though shy mannered.' He met them again at another party, and this bright family circle seemed to exercise almost a fascination over his romantic heart.* 'In the evening,' he writes, 'came the

* This sort of romantic feeling, now considered old-fashioned, Lord Beaconsfield seemed to nourish even in his declining years. It was shown to the last in his novels, where he delighted in a

beauty, Lady St. Maur, and anything so splendid I never gazed upon. Even the handsomest family in the world, which I think the Sheridans are, all looked dull. Clusters of the darkest hair, the most brilliant complexion, and a *contour* of face perfectly ideal. In the evening Mrs. Norton sang and acted, and did everything that was delightful. Old Mrs. Sheridan, who, by-the-bye, is young and pretty, and authoress of "Carwell," is my greatest admirer; in fact, the whole family have a very proper idea of my merits, and I like them all.'

Many years after, when grown old and in retirement at Hughenden, the image of these goddesses used to rise up before him; and he expatiated to a young man who was with him, Lord Ronald Gower, on the light and lustre they cast upon him. 'He spoke of his early friendship with the three Sheridan sisters, all beautiful women. He described how delightful were the dinners in old days at Mrs. Norton's, oppo-

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sort of chivalrous machinery, introducing beauty, circlets of jewels, perfumed chambers, Duchesses, and Lady Corisandes. This treatment, though it often caused a smile, was founded on a reverential feeling for what he believed was associated with what was high and noble. Some time before his last Administration, when he reappeared at some fashionable festivities, he seemed to assume that a famous belle of his younger days—rather an elderly matron—was still entitled to the same prestige and homage as of yore, and treated her with the deferential homage due to peerless beauty. At a dinner-party he was heard to say, 'Permit me to relieve that fair hand of that *carafe*,' or something of the same old-fashioned pattern.

site a public-house at Story's Gate, more than forty years ago; and of the wit and humour that flowed more copiously than did the claret. Lady Dufferin was his chief admiration, more beautiful than her beautiful sisters. "Dreams!" he murmured, gazing into the fire.'

There was also in Mrs. Norton's train another brilliant young man, who, like Mr. Disraeli, was tinctured with the charm of sentiment and romance to a high degree—a sympathetic feeling, which was to be found in his writings in advanced life. This was Mr. Bulwer, whose brilliant and spirited story of 'Pelham,' written in 1828, had already made him a reputation. How devoted an admirer he was of the young authoress will be seen from some verses he sang in her praise:

'The queenly spirit of a star
That longed to tread the earth,
Passed into mortal mould—the hour
Made holy by thy birth;
And kept its lustre and its power
To teach the earth,
The wondering earth,
What shapes immortals are!

'No human beauty ever bore
An aspect thus divine;
The crown the brows of seraphs bore
Hath left its mark on thine.'

These tributes of verse were then in high fashion. The belles of our time are to be propitiated by something more substantial.

Among her other gifts thus early exhibited, she had shown signs of an elegant literary taste, and when she was only twelve or thirteen, had astonished her friends by producing a little satire in verse, written in a flow of spirit and vivacity, and illustrated by her own drawings. It was called 'The Dandies' Rout,' and is said to have dealt with the follies of fops in free and humorous style.* This strong literary turn was speedily developed, and her whole life, almost without interruption, was henceforth devoted to literary labour. Her works, prose and poetical, have little of the amateur, being always carefully finished, and exhibiting conscientious industry.

Over sixty years ago there came into fashion a new and rather elegant form of 'drawing-room book,' which for a long time was in high favour, and illustrated a curious phase of literary taste. This was the now forgotten 'Annual,' which originated in an ingenious publisher's idea of utilizing the vanity of 'persons of quality' for purposes of trade. These costly and handsome volumes were first introduced by an enterprising German, Ackerman of Regent Street, who, in conjunction with Mr. Shoberl, published the first of the 'Annuals' in 1823, styled 'The Forget-Me-Not,' to be speedily followed by imitations—'The Keep-

* Of this early work I have not been able to discover any trace either in the lists of publications, or in reviews.

sake,' 'The Charm,' 'The Book of Beauty,' and others. The line-engravings were of the most artistic kind, and the 'literary matter,' it appears from Lady Blessington's correspondence, was furnished to suit each picture. The books were resplendent in crimson silk binding and gilt edges, and were printed in the best style, and on the finest paper. Two ladies of high fashion were at different periods selected to edit these works, Lady Blessington and Mrs. Norton, who, by their connection with persons 'in society,' were able to secure any amount of indifferent verses, the contributors being sufficiently repaid by their appearance in print, while the publishers had the advantage of their names and high position. In this list we find some writers of merit, such as Mr. Monckton Milnes, Lord Strangford, Barry Cornwall, Mr. Lamb, Sir E. Lytton Bulwer, and even Charles Dickens. There were a few paid contributors, and Mr. Moore was once offered £600 for 120 lines of either prose or verse. The expenses, indeed, were enormous. The ventures grew in size, expanding from small octavo into large atlas-shape, like 'Finden's Tableaux,' finally ruining every publisher connected with them. Heath, the proprietor of the 'Book of Beauty,' died in 1848, owing Lady Blessington some £700, while it was calculated that her connection with these undertakings had only helped to involve her in ruin. For though the fashionable contributors secured gave

their productions gratuitously, she had to gather them about her and repay their services by profuse and constant hospitality and entertainment. The whole, as I have said, is a curious episode in the history of literary manners and customs, and only offers one more proof that such spurious devices to gratify some passing whim or caprice, are as unprofitable as they are unwholesome. The present generation has seen what is merely the revival of the same old taste, viz., the appetite of the crowd for details of the life and doings of persons of fashion, which 'Society papers,' as they are called, are busily engaged in satisfying.

Mrs. Norton's poetical gifts were extraordinary, and though she figured in the ranks of those authoresses of fashion who adorned 'Annuals' and 'Books of Beauty' with their compositions, there is a breadth and finish in her work which is almost masculine. We cannot, however, go so far as the enthusiastic Quarterly Reviewer, said to be Mr. Lockhart, who pronounced that she was 'a female Byron;' but there is certainly a strong Byronic tinge in her effusions. Once having seriously taken up literature she never relaxed in her labour, and to the day of her death pursued it almost as a profession with unflagging industry. With practice her prose style became finished and effective, and from associating with masters of the art, prominent literary and political characters, she came at last to write

in a thoughtful and vigorous manner, wholly different from that of the fashionable literary ladies of her period. In her latter years she was content to write without signing her name, such pleasure did she take in her work.

What strikes us in her poetry is the earnestness of feeling, the masculine cast of thought, and the mode in which her own personality is made to furnish dramatic colour and action. It is thus evident that she wrote because she wished to express her own feelings, and leave a record of her many trials, and not from a *dilettante* longing to figure in print. As one of her critics put it: 'This is poetry, true poetry, and of the sort we unfeignedly approve; the genuine product of a cultivated mind, a rich fancy, and a warm well-regulated heart.' Her dedications to old friends and champions have all this vivid note of 'actuality.' There are addresses to fast friends, Rogers and Lord Lansdowne, which have a singular charm of reminiscence, and a genuine ring different from the conventional complimentary strain of such things. The reader will welcome this charming picture of an interior, which has been often described more pretentiously:

'TO SAMUEL ROGERS.

'Who can forget, who at thy social board,
Hath sat and seen the pictures richly stored
In all their tints of glory, and of gloom,
Brightening the precincts of thy quiet room?

With busts and statues full of that deep grace
Which modern hands have lost the skill to trace:
Fragments of beauty, perfect as thy song
On that sweet land to which they did belong.
Th' exact and classic taste by thee displayed
Not with a rich man's idle fond parade;
Not with the pomp of some vain connoisseur,
Proud of his bargains, of his judgment sure,
But with the feeling, kind and sad, of one
Who thro' far countries wandering hath gone,
And brought away dear keepsakes, to remind
His heart and home of all he has left behind.'

In a more feeling and even key are the lines to one of the friends who stood by her in her trials, the venerated Lord Lansdowne, which are placed at the opening of 'The Lady of La Garaye':

'Friend of old days, of suffering, storm and strife,
Patient and kind through many a wild appeal,
In the arena of thy brilliant life,
Never too busy, or too cold to feel:
Companion from whose ever-teeming store
Of thought and knowledge, happy memory brings
So much of social wit and sage's lore,
Garnered and gleaned by me as precious things;
Kinsman of him whose very name soon grew
Unreal as music heard in pleasant dreams.
So vain the hope my girlish fancy drew,
So faint and far his vanished presence seems.
The joy that budded on my own youth's bloom,
When life wore still a glory and a gloss,
Is hidden from me in the silent tomb,
Smiting with premature unnatural loss.
So that my very soul is wrung with pain,
Meeting old friends whom I most love to see.

Where are the younger lives since these remain?
I weep the eyes that should have wept for me.
But all the more I cling to those who speak
Like thee in tones unaltered by my change;
Greeting my saddened glance and faded cheek
With the same welcome that seemed sweet and strange
In early days; when I of gifts made proud,
That could the notice of such men beguile,
Stood listening to thee in some brilliant crowd,
With the warm triumph of a youthful smile.'

'How vividly,' adds the reviewer, probably her friend Mr. Hayward, 'the last stanza calls up the group of beauties and celebrities, of which she and her munificent host formed the centre, in the very saloon, perhaps, where Madame de Staël took her premeditated stand with Rogers!'

And here is a feeling reminiscence of her mother's earnest care for her, and that patient and at last successful struggle to support and bring up her young family:

'Oft since that hour, in sadness I retrace
My childhood's vision of thy calm sweet face;
Oft see thy form, its mournful beauty shrouded
In thy black weeds, and coif of widow's woe;
Thy dark expressive eyes all dim and clouded
By that deep wretchedness the lonely know;
Stifling thy grief, to hear some weary task,
Conn'd by unwilling lips, with listless air
Hoarding thy means, lest future need might ask
More than the widow's pittance thou couldst spare;
Hidden, forgotten, by the great and gay,
Enduring sorrow not by fits and starts,
But a long self-denial day by day,
Alone amidst thy brood of careless hearts.'

The woman who could write these lines must have had a feeling, affectionate nature; and in the difficulties and dangers which awaited her, was sure to command the sympathies of the friends, whom she thus showed she could value.

Her poetical compositions were of an ambitious cast, and into all she seemed to throw a portion of herself, her sorrows, and her very heart. This gives them interest and vitality. It was in 1829 that 'The Sorrows of Rosalie' appeared, and in 1831 'The Undying One'—highly strained titles that would now excite a smile. The more important and better known 'Lady of La Garaye' did not appear until thirty years later, when her style had become mellowed and tempered. This work has always been a favourite, both from the charming story selected, and the grace and poetical feeling with which it is told. There were other minor works, such as the 'Rose of Jericho' and 'The Child of the Islands,' published in 1845. She had also extraordinary tact and skill in writing little 'copies of verses' intended for popular use and appreciation—a most difficult art in which distinguished writers have failed; and 'Words by the Hon. Mrs. Norton' soon became a sure and certain presage of sale and appreciation. These efforts were invariably pretty and graceful.

Among Maclise's spirited sketches of distinguished *littérateurs* are two of Mrs. Norton. She

figures in a group of 'Fraserian' ladies, entitled 'Regina's Maids of Honour,' where she is seated in the most prominent place beside L. E. L., Lady Blessington, and others. Here she seems in her stately imposing mood. The other sketch is singularly piquant, and expresses her careless gaiety very happily. It represents her seated at a breakfast-table, her figure full of expression, even to the fashion of dress of the time, which has a quaint air. She is shown pouring milk into her cup, while the tea-things are of a fantastic pattern, representing grotesque birds and animals. In all these sketches the painter has seemed to seek to portray 'notes' of character and habits rather than to preserve actual likeness of feature. The bard of Regina sings the heroine's praise in these rapturous lines, which are rhymed and metrical, though cast in the shape of prose:

'Full is the face that flushes near her; can we draw away our gaze? vision nobler, brighter, dearer, did ne'er on human eyeball blaze. Front sublime, and orb of splendour, glance that every thought can speak; feeling proud, or pathos tender, the lid to wet, to burn the cheek; or, my halting rhyme to shorten, can't I say 'tis Mrs. Norton? Heiress of a race to whom Genius his constant boon has given through long-descended lines to bloom in wit of earth or strain of Heaven. Oh, if the Wandering Jew had seen those sunny eyes, those locks of jet, how vain, how trifling would have been the agony of fond regret, which in thy strains he's made to feel for the creations of thy brain—those wounds thou say'st he lived to heal—thee lost, he ne'er had lov'd again.'

Very early, in 1835, she made her first attempt at novel-writing, and her 'Stuart of Dunleath' was much admired. Even now, after fifty years, it is still reprinted and read. Not until 1858 did she make another experiment with 'Lost and Saved,' and five years later with 'Old Sir Douglas.' These productions are all marked with earnestness of purpose, are full of feeling, and offer a natural interesting story, carried out in a careful workmanlike style. All this shows a surprising versatility. She was later to exhibit her powers in some vigorous pamphlets, dealing with social questions and grievances, such as employment in factories, and also the oppression of her sex, in connection with the control of husbands over the property of their wives. Not content with this display of powers, she was ambitious of writing for the stage.

In the midst of her troubles, she wrote a drama founded on Beckford's story of 'Vathek,' and sent it to Mr. Bunn, then directing Drury Lane. That manager, the 'Poet Bunn,' immortalized by the line, 'When hollow hearts shall wear a mask,' was not likely to be the best judge of a poetical drama. He gave it, however, careful consideration, and returned it for amendment and alteration. In due time she wrote to remind him of what he had perhaps forgotten :

'Hampton Court Palace,
'Monday, October 9th, 1836.

'SIR,

'I take this opportunity of reminding you of a piece you looked at last season, founded on Mr. Beckford's celebrated story of "Vathek." I have entirely remodelled the opening and concluding scenes, which was, I believe, your object in returning it to me, and I would like to hear from you at your leisure respecting the probability of its representation at Drury Lane, and at what time it would be brought out. I trust you will spare a minute from your numerous avocations to reply to my question, as I am at present anxious to avail myself of my talents for writing, and am indeed obliged to make arrangements respecting such works as I may have by me nearly or entirely completed, amongst which is the drama Mr. Bentick brought for your approval.

'Wishing Drury Lane all success, in spite of the stunning and irreparable blow which has fallen at a moment when we looked forward eagerly to the renewed efforts of the most gifted singer and actress of our day, poor Malibran,

'I remain, sir,
'Yours obediently,
'CAROLINE NORTON.

'To A. Bunn, Esq.'

In his own amusing fashion Bunn sets out the motives which compelled him to decline the produc-

tion: 'The terms of intimacy on which I had the pleasure of being with Mrs. Norton's brother and several of her friends, the production of a play by such a delightful writer, and the expression even of a wish from one so highly gifted, *laying aside any suppositional reasons of a temporary nature*, were claims it required more than the ordinary fortitude of a manager perhaps to withstand, and I know I have been blamed for withstanding them; but I felt the exquisite beauties of Mrs. Norton's metrical compositions were so overloaded by a pressure of dialogue, and a redundancy of scenic effects, the fidelity and rapid succession of which it would have puzzled any scene-painters and mechanists to follow, that it was at least a duty to point them out to her. But important changes in a piece once constructed, and finished upon that construction, are more difficult of achievement than re-writing such piece altogether; and with the subsequent occupation of this endowed authoress upon pleasanter and more profitable labour,' etc.—in short, he declined her piece.

When recalling the attractions of this remarkable woman, and her sympathetic power in gathering about her at her modest residence all that was brilliant in the society of her day, we have to lament that in our own time this type should have become almost extinct. Such a decay would seem to be owing, not to the failure of such

vivacious intellects, but to the lack of opportunity for its appreciation. It may be that the world is so much with us now, and society so subject to conditions of restless hurry, that there is neither opportunity nor patience for this leisurely form of enjoyment. It is at least certain that the salon, presided over by some hostess whose conversational gifts and intellectual influence formed its attraction, has passed away. With this departure the reason for cultivating such attractions has also departed.

Within the last fifty years we might count in London some three of the more official salons directed by clever ladies—viz., Holland House, Gore House, and Strawberry Hill; and some three 'circles,' where presided the Miss Berrys, Lady Ashburton, and Mrs. Norton. The last two were remarkable women, and in some points resembled each other. Lady Ashburton, better known as Lady Harriet Baring, has been described by her friend, Lord Houghton, in one of his carefully finished 'monographs,' which abound in delicate strokes of character. 'She assumed,' he tells us, 'a demeanour of superiority towards her husband's family, which gave just offence.' Lord Houghton amiably attributes this behaviour, not to pride or personal dislike, but to 'a wilful repugnance towards any association that seemed fixed on circumstances or obligation.' This temper exhibited by a man would constitute what is called an 'ill-conditioned

fellow.' In this spirit were some of her cynical remarks. 'The worst of being ill,' she would say, 'is that one is left to the care of one's relations, and one has no remedy at law, whatever they may do.'

One merit, however, she allowed to her husband's family—high financial gifts—which, indeed, no one could dispute, with powers of energy and perseverance. 'The Barings,' she would say, 'are everywhere; they get everything. The only check upon them is, they are members of the Church of England. Otherwise, there is no saying what they would do.' It was in this sort of 'wicked' compliment that she excelled, and perhaps it was the pleasure of listening to such speeches that constituted the chief attraction found in her society by her friends. Her husband himself, a man of gifts and capacity, had to fall into insignificance when she was present; though this silence and self-effacement was attributed by his friends to love and unbounded admiration for his clever wife. 'This independence,' Lord Houghton further tells us, with some *naïveté*, 'of any society of which she herself was not the centre and chief, led her to form one of her own, which was limited to a small circle of friends.' These were retained and amused by the rather acid flavour of her speeches, which, it was contended, had no real malice in them, though certainly having the appearance of ill-nature. Some members of her circle were driven away, like Mr. Thackeray, though he was invited back later,

and made his peace by a sketch representing the lady emptying a brasier of burning coals on his head.

The free and lively style of comment pursued by Lady Harriet Baring was a dangerous gift, and there were 'many grave and estimable persons to whom her electric transitions from grave to gay were distasteful; others, who were distanced in the race of thought, went away with a sense of humiliation; while many shrank away from the merriment of her victory.' 'I don't mind being knocked down,' said one victim, 'but I can't stand being danced upon.' Lord Houghton urges that this unpleasantness was the result of taking her too seriously by ignorant persons who did not understand her harmlessness; and Princess Lieven wittily said 'that you had to *subscribe* for a long term before you got to understand her style of talk.' Which, it seems, consisted in 'the freest exercise of an intellectual gaiety, presenting the most agreeable and amusing pictures in few and varied words; making high comedy out of daily life; relieving sound sense and serious observation with imaginative contrasts and delicate surprises.' In this spirit were some of her happy utterances: 'When one sees what marriage generally is, I quite wonder women do not give up the profession.' 'Friendship has, no doubt, great advantages. You know a man so much better, and can laugh at him so much

more.' To some one expatiating on the pleasure of having a wife to greet one on returning at the end of the day, she said, 'Your notion of a wife is evidently a Strasburg goose, whom you will find at the fire when you come home from amusing yourself.' Lamenting that she had no 'domestic duties' to occupy her, in which 'line' she would have shone, she declared she was a '*cuisinière incomprise*.'

Lady Blessington's circle was, after all, little more than a well-directed system of 'lionizing'—every stranger of any celebrity being eagerly sought, and brought to pay his homage to her. The attraction seems to have been the cultivation of good spirits, and amusement; the handsome, clever, irresistible D'Orsay contributing his French good-humour and liveliness, and inspiring the whole. Unlimited 'quizzing,' and even practical jokes, furnished the entertainment, while the higher sort of wit or conversation would have been out of place. It was the fashion, however, for the leading literary men and politicians to resort thither, who were at least glad of the opportunity of meeting each other. Dr. Madden, who died only a few months since, and who in his youth had visited Lady Hester Stanhope in the East, has given a good description of these meetings. An old Frenchman prone to tears, and who was always ready to recite verses describing his own sorrows, was a favourite butt; and Count d'Orsay excelled in making such victims exhibit their folly.

'It used to be a scene, that it was most difficult to witness with due restraint, when Monsieur Julien le Jeune, all radiant with smiles and overflowing with urbanity, having paid his devoirs to her ladyship, would be approached by Count d'Orsay, and with the eyes of the whole circle fixed on him (duly prepared to expect amusement), the poor old man would be entreated to favour Lady Blessington with the recital of another canto of his political afflictions. Then Julien would protest he had read all that was worth reading to her ladyship, but at length would yield to the persuasions of Lady Blessington with looks and gestures which plainly said, "Infandum Regina jubes renovare dolorem."

'There was one present, the Count observed, who had never heard the "Chagrins," long and earnestly as he desired that gratification—"N'est-ce pas, Madden, vous n'avez jamais entendu les Chagrins politiques de notre cher ami Monsieur Julien?"

'All the reply that could be given was in a single word, "Jamais."

'"Allons, mon ami," continued D'Orsay. "Ce pauvre Madden a bien besoin d'entendre vos Chagrins politiques—il a les siens aussi"—(I had been recently reviewed and reviled in some periodicals). "Il a souffert, lui—il a des sympathies pour les blessés, il faut le donner cette triste plaisir—n'est-ce pas, Madden?"

'Monsieur Julien, after playing off for some minutes

all the diffident airs of a bashful young lady dying to sing and protesting she cannot, placed himself at the upper end of the room, near a table with wax lights, pulled the roll of paper from his breast-pocket, and began to recite his "Chagrins politiques" in a most lugubrious tone, like Mademoiselle Duchesnois—avec les pleurs dans la voix. The salon was crowded with distinguished guests. On the left hand of the tender-hearted poet and most doleful reciter of his own sorrows—this quondam secretary of Robespierre—was Lady Blessington in her well-known fauteuil, looking most intently, and with apparent anxious solicitude, full in the face of the dolorous reciter. On the other side of Monsieur Julien, but somewhat in front of him, sat Count d'Orsay, with a handkerchief occasionally lifted to his eyes; and ever and anon a plaudit or an exclamation of pain was uttered by him at the recital of some particular "Chagrin." At the very instant when the accents of the reciter were becoming most exceedingly lugubrious and ludicrous, and the difficulty of refraining from laughter was at its height, D'Orsay was heard to whisper in a *sotto voce*, as he leaned his head over the back of the chair I sat on, "Pleurez donc!"

'Dr. Quin, who was present at this scene—one of the richest, certainly, I ever witnessed—during the recital contributed largely to its effect. Whenever D'Orsay would seize on some particular passage,

and exclaim, "Ah, que c'est beau!" then would Quin's "Magnifique!" "Superbe!" "Vraiment beau!" be intoned with all due solemnity, and a call for that moving passage over again would be preferred, and kindly complied with. At the conclusion of each "Chagrin," poor Julien's eyes were always sure to be bathed with tears, and as much so at the latest recital of his oft-repeated griefs as at the earliest delivery of them.

'It was always in this melting mood, at the conclusion of a recital, that he was again conducted by the hand to the fauteuil of Lady Blessington by D'Orsay, and there bending low, as the noble lady of the mansion graciously smiled on him, he received compliments and consolations, most liberally bestowed on his "Chagrins politiques."'

A yet more amusing scene, in which the late genial and popular Dr. Quin figured, exhibits the irrepressible D'Orsay at his best: 'At a particularly moving part of the "Chagrins," Dr. Quin, a person of remarkably juvenile appearance for his years, had entered the salon; the venerable figure of James Smith, with his fine bald forehead, and his crutch-stick in his hand, was to be observed on one side of Julien, and the noble one of D'Orsay on the other. Julien had no sooner concluded, with the usual *applaudissement*, than D'Orsay whispered something in the ear of Julien, pointing alternately to Quin and Smith. Julien, greatly moved, repeated the words

aloud, "Ah, que c'est touchant! Ah, mon Dieu! Cet tendre amour filial comme c'est beau! comme c'est touchant!" Here D'Orsay, approaching Quin, and pointing to James Smith, exclaimed, "Allez, mon ami! embrassez votre père! embrassez le, mon pauvre enfant!" Smith held out his arms—Quin looked very much amazed. D'Orsay then said to Julien, "C'est toujours comme ça, toujours comme ça, ce pauvre garçon—avant le monde il a honte d'embrasser son père." Quin needed no further intimation of D'Orsay's design; he sprang from his chair, made a desperate rush at Smith, and nearly capsized the poor old gouty man in the violence of his filial transports, and then, while they were locked in each other's arms, tender exclamations were heard, frequently repeated—"O fortunate meeting! O happy reconciliation! O fond father! O affectionate son!" And all this time D'Orsay was standing before them, overcome with apparent emotion, smiling blandly; while Julien, with his handkerchief to his eyes, kept gulping and sobbing, and crying out—"Ah, mon Dieu, que c'est touchant! pauvre jeune homme! pauvre père!"'

The American, N. P. Willis, who more than forty years ago introduced the system of describing the manners and doings of the 'upper classes'—then much abused, but now accepted—recounts how he met Moore, Bulwer, and many more at this house; and Haydon, the painter, declared, 'Everybody goes

to Lady Blessington. She has the first news of everything, and everybody seems delighted to tell her. No woman will be more missed. She is the centre of more talent and gaiety than any other woman of fashion in London.' The disastrous tragic collapse of Gore House is well known. The series of social meetings closed in utter ruin, bankruptcy, and the brokers' men.

A catastrophe of a different description disturbed the sparkling current of the life at Story's Gate. Its brilliant mistress was now in the heyday of her attractions, and it is evidence of their powerful spell that almost everyone at first sight was drawn under its influence. 'I could not look at Mrs. Norton,' the new actor Macready says in 1835, 'without looking long. Her face is one to think of.' He speedily went to call on her again, and found Lord Castlereagh in the drawing-room, 'who stared, as I, entrenching myself in my democratic pride, did again. We waited some little time, when she appeared dressed for a walk. She introduced us, and after a chat, wherein we heard of the duel between Lord Seymour and Sir Colquhoun Grant, we ended our short visit.'*

* The allusion here was to the elopement of her brother with a Scotch heiress, which the angry father insisted was arranged at her sister Lady Seymour's house. It was curious to find the adventure of the author of 'The Rivals' thus repeated in successive generations. The incidents seem, indeed, to belong to a comedy like 'The Rivals,' for there were plots, waiting-maids, post-

We can conceive the high-spirited Mrs. Norton entering with relish into this adventure. Nothing, indeed, in her character strikes us so much as her warmth of attachment to her friends, and the earnestness and sincerity of her letters. Notwithstanding her long series of trials, and the habitual drudgery with which she prosecuted her labours, she was in them always free and affectionate, laying her heart open, as if she had no troubles at home to absorb her. One of the confidantes to whom she was much attached was Mrs. Shelley—Mary Godwin—wife of the poet, herself an attractive, clever woman, long associated with clever and brilliant men. In her Mrs. Norton found a congenial and appreciative friend, to whom she addressed many a natural and occasionally witty note or note-let,* which present a good idea of her natural *mode*

chaise, pursuit, angry challenge, and finally a duel. The injured father first 'called out' Mr. Norton, addressing him in bitter terms, accusing him of 'identifying himself with this nefarious proceeding,' and having acted in a manner unbecoming a magistrate or a gentleman. Mr. Norton replied that he knew nothing of the business till it was over, adding that he gave this explanation in deference to his feelings, but that he should require a retractation of the terms used. The father next accused Lord Seymour of having lent himself to the plot, and demanded satisfaction. Lord Seymour promised to gratify his wishes, provided the imputation on Lady Seymour was withdrawn. They met at Hampstead, and separated after an interchange of shots.

* As I have stated in the Preface, Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, the genial hosts of Boscombe Manor, have placed these letters at my disposal.

and *gaieté de cœur*. The very turns of the sentences will be found pleasant and original. 'There is a spell,' she wrote to Mrs. Shelley, 'against a pleasanter drive for me than usual. My mother, who is a great invalid, and keeps *old-lady* hours, has sent me word she will dine with me at *three* to-day. I shall call to-morrow at your door, and if you are not utterly provoked with me, endeavour to frustrate destiny by a determined drive with you.' A proposal to visit the theatre: 'Will you go to the Haymarket with me this evening? I am beyond measure bored and *low:* other people lie down and take a little *sal volatile*, but I always go to the play. I have moved myself and baggage to 16, Norfolk Street, Park Lane: through the grating of my prison-bars I drop this note, hoping some friendly passenger will charitably carry it to its destination. Written on this *detestable* smoking day of August, at about a quarter to two p.m.' Again she writes, asking her friend to come to her, saying 'it would be a great refreshment (if you do not mind my being a *little* dull and a little cross).'

But here follows a more unrestrained communication, on the text of paying for a place at the theatre:

'You certainly are the pleasantest note-writer in the world; but your conduct in money matters is not so praiseworthy. If you insist on paying for your place in the balcony, well and good: it is *ungenteel*

*to refuse to be paid:* only I will say frankly, once for all, what I *feel* about it. I am conscious of being—I will not say *extravagant*, for that implies *habitual* self-indulgence in money matters—but *reckless*, when I am out of spirits and want to be amused and excited, what I spend for the moment. Now that may suit *me* very well (though sometimes even I repent); but it cannot suit the friends who are with me to be suddenly called upon to share in the caprices of these oppressive hours. The only thing you will achieve by making me think that we must *share*, is that I shall sometimes *check* myself, which is disagreeable to me, and sometimes be *alone* when it would be infinitely pleasanter to me to be in your frank and cheerful company. It *gênes* me to be paid for pleasures, which I should equally have paid for *alone*. (if a woman *could* run about alone like a young bachelor); and as I know you practise self-denial, and serve those who belong to you, I think it vexes me more in you than it would in any other person. I am very prosy, and I have no change. I send back the sovereign (*in a blank cover*, like a letter in a novel which the heroine has received); and for the future we will stand at the door of great places of public amusement, consulting not our inclinations, but our pockets, with mutual deference and respect.

'I have been ill all day. I almost wish Thursday past. All you can do (and that is pretty much to

ask of a lady) is to sit with me in whatever *pot-house* I may take up my abode, Monday. I shall know better to-morrow morning what *implements* can be had. You will smile when you hear who I sent as T.'s substitute.

'My hand shakes so! What is the difference between *courage* and *nerve?* I suppose a more fearless woman does not exist as to actual *bodily* danger, and yet I am an ass on these occasions.

'I *was* amused yesterday, and I feel comfortable with Tolstoi—he is warm-hearted and sincere, and I have been used to him for six years, which is always a merit—or *feels like* one—in a friend; also, he knows all my past joys and sorrows. Kiss-and-love—yes, Kisselieff (delightful are your comments on him) is not so pleasing; perhaps the very effort to fall into our ways and be *cosy* made him less so. To be familiar without being intimate is to canter an unbroken horse, uneasy and uncertain, not to say dangerous.'

In all these letters, varied as their topics are, it will be noted how airily and gracefully the most trivial subjects are touched. And what shrewd remarks upon life and its events are uttered carelessly and *en passant!* Her pleasantry on such a subject as the taking a house illustrates this happy manner and spirit: 'The papers have sent me on a nice little tour to different countries. I hope it will increase my intelligence and learning. I am not

*walkable*, or would have long since called upon you.'

In the same letter she describes one of her many annoyances: 'Forgive me! ill-luck pursues me in all my undertakings. I have, I find, been utterly cheated by the Mr. —— who proposed to me to get up a magazine; he gave me a false cheque, and obtained from me a blank acceptance which he has filled up for £1,000. The vexation and necessary legal steps to be taken in this matter, added to my being ill, ever since I stepped out of the mail at Bristol, have prevented my writing.

'With respect to your house in Berkeley Square, I think it would be most childish to give up a good and cheap house because a fie-fie had lived in it, which, I suppose, is the English of the "associations." My uncle says he never heard of such an objection, but he is not the best person to ask. If it is any satisfaction to you to know that they thought to deter me from taking a house in Hereford Street, by telling me there were two houses of that sort in the same street, and that I obstinately persist in thinking the neighbourhood as good as when the houses do not acknowledge themselves (as in Grosvenor Square), you have that bright example before you. I really think these sort of objections absurd, and if you consider them otherwise, you will never get a *small*, *cheap*, and *pretty* house at the West-end of the town, for such houses are the

natural prey of such persons; and ever and anon they hire them, and put parrot's cages and geraniums in the balcony, which they paint light green.

'But if you act discreetly and modestly (that is, if you paint the rails *dark* green, and *don't* buy a parrot, and are contented with two geraniums *inside* the drawing-room) the barrenness of virtue will be apparent, and the house will be as good as if its face was built out of the sorrowful and remorseful bricks of the Millbank Penitentiary.

'Adieu! I am vexed and worried, so I am not much the better of being here, though a lovelier place never was, or a quieter and pleasanter one.'

Her friend—a truly interesting woman—she began to like more and more, because she found in her a tender sympathy for her situation; and later on, when sorrows and trials came thick, a true and valuable support. Friends were anxious to procure for Mrs. Godwin, Mrs. Shelley's mother, some trifling provision from the Ministry. William Godwin had some years before been supported by influential friends—in a similar case—notably by Charles Lamb, who had drawn up his memorial. Mrs. Norton threw herself into her friend's cause with a hearty and practical goodwill, and was unwearied in securing the good offices of those who could be useful. How well-directed was the course of these efforts will be seen from the following letters:

'DEAR MRS. SHELLEY' (she writes from Hampton Court Palace),—'I know you must have thought me a brute; and yet I swear that every time I have put off writing, it has been from the hope of sending you word that Mrs. Godwin was to be helped. I have never seen either Lord Lansdowne or others without pressing that one subject, and I do believe and hope you will now have the royal bounty again. Lord Lansdowne agreed that it was very hard, and said he had always imagined Mrs. S. had got her small pension. I assure you I have never forgotten. I have urged it as if I wanted it myself, and in every possible way; and it is not my fault that the unaccountable prejudices and reluctance of other people stand in the way.'

In such hands, and with such hearty co-operation, the matter was pushed.

In the next letter, when Mrs. Norton reports progress, it will be seen how she lightens business details with her usual sketches and comments. Unfortunately, however, there was little likelihood of success.

'I have so bad a headache, I must lie down or go to bed instead of coming to see you.

'About the pension, I would advise that Sir L. B. *himself* should ask Lord M. *himself*. All *intermediaries* bear the same proportion of use in transacting business that fal, lal, la does to the words of a song;

and though Lord M. threatens that he will instantly desire an annuity may be bought for Mrs. G. out of the proceeds of "Devereux" and "Paul Clifford," yet I think the case not so desperate. He will do much more, being persuaded that it is fit and rational and right that he should do it, than as a *favour* to anyone. Sir L. B. (what a pretty name it is!) is a personal favourite—at least I have heard him praise him not only for talents, which all admit, but in a friendly and approving way: being a *man*, and a man of some weight, I think if he took the trouble to write on the subject, it would do more than our petitioning; it would make it a grave matter of business. I perceive no earthly obstacle except the old and *usual* scruple that if the rule is relaxed, and the *connections* of men of genius are to have claims, there will be no end of pensioning. I think you will get what you want for Mrs. G. nevertheless.

'Excuse bluntness. I am in pain; and I wish to be understood. I was much disappointed at not getting what I hoped, a completely definite answer to send you; but one must take people as their natures will let one, and it is the nature of the petitioned to give indefinite answers.

'No one has pressed it yet on Lord M.'s attention, and he does not know who is the great instrument expected to do so. I am going to write to Sir L. B. myself, on behalf of an Italian, who wants to translate English novels; and I will say this to

him, or you can. I *scrawl* because I ache, and am impatient.

'Yours ever,

'C. N.'

The business, it will be seen, suggested to her some shrewd ideas, useful for those who have the unwelcome duty of pressing the great for influence and service.

'24, Bolton Street.

'Anything I can say or do in the matter you may depend on my saying and doing; nothing "worries" me, except the great uncertainty of making people *feel* on these sort of occasions. I think the letter to Lord Melbourne very good. I think the other a little long. I would begin direct to the point: "As the daughter of the late Mr. Godwin, and the person on whom his aged widow mainly relies for assistance, I venture to address you on the subject of obtaining," etc., etc. Press *not* on the politics of Mr. Godwin (for God knows how much gratitude for that ever survives), but on *his* celebrity, the widow's *age* and *ill-health*, and (if your proud little spirit will bear it) on your own *toils*, for, after all, the truth is that you, being generous, will, rather than see the old creature starve, work your brains and your pen; and you have your son and delicate health to hinder you from having *means* to help her.

'As to petitioning, no one dislikes begging more than I do, especially when one begs for what seems

mere justice; but I have long observed that though people will resist *claims* (however just), they like to do *favours*. Therefore when *I* beg I am a crawling lizard, a humble toad, a brown snake in cold weather, or any other simile most feebly "*rampante*"—the reverse of "*rampant*," which would be the natural attitude for petitioning—but which must never be assumed except in the poodle-style, standing with one's paws bent to catch the bits of bread on one's nose.

'Forgive my jesting! upon my honour I feel sincerely anxious for your anxiety, and sad enough on my own affairs; but Irish blood *will* dance! My meaning is, that if one asks *at all*, one should rather think of the person written to, than one's own feelings. He is an indolent man—talk of your *literary labours;* a kind man—speak of her age and *infirmities;* a patron of all *genius*—talk of your father's *and your own;* a prudent man—speak of the likelihood of the pension being a short grant (as you have done); lastly, he is a *great* man—take it all as a personal favour. As to not apologizing for the intrusion, we ought always to kneel down and beg pardon for daring to remind people we are not so well off as they are.

'Not knowing whether these are the letters, or only *copies of letters*, I have not kept them. Did you mean me to send the one to Lord M.?

'Yours ever truly,

'C. N.'

Lord Melbourne, however, found himself fettered, like other high officials, by the rules of his situation. Indeed, one of the embarrassments of the eminent men in office was to meet the claims for place of the fascinating and witty ladies who welcomed them in their salons.*

The issue of the matter, after all, did not repay Mrs. Norton's exertions :

* It will be found amusing to see how summarily the 'great Captain' could dispose of one of these captivating suitors, Lady Blessington. The pleasant irony and rather 'brutal' frankness, veiled under compliments, will be noted :

'I am much flattered by your ladyship's recollection, evinced by your recommendation of a gentleman to be appointed Provost of Worcester College, Oxford.

'Since I heard of the vacancy in that office, which it becomes my duty to fill, in my capacity of Chancellor of the University, I had been considering the qualifications of the several candidates, not less than seventy in number ; and consulting with archbishops, bishops, and the heads of the University, in respect to the choice to be made.

'I acknowledge that it never occurred to me to refer to the ladies, and I return my thanks to the one who has assisted me with her counsel.

'I am apprehensive, however, that I cannot hold out expectations to Mr. Landor that he will be appointed.

'The Provost of Worcester College has the government of that institution. The qualifications required to enable him to perform the duties of the office are various, and quite different from those which have attracted your attention towards Mr. Landor. In the choice which I shall make, I must satisfy not only the College and its visitors, but the University, the Church, and the public at large.

'I hope, therefore, that you will excuse me if I decline to attend to your wishes upon this occasion.'

'Frampton, Dorchester, April 21, 1835.

'I cannot give Mrs. Godwin any part of her husband's income, because the place is now *abolished.* But if Mrs. Shelley will send me the case, I will try if I cannot give her some assistance.

(Signed) 'MELBOURNE.'

'DEAR MRS. SHELLEY,—I suppose Lord M. proposes to make the Royal Bounty Fund available in the case of poor Mrs. Godwin, as in others where it has been difficult to arrange what should be done, where a pension is impossible. Do not suppose that any worries of my own would ever prevent my doing what I could for *anyone*—far less for you, of whom though I *know* comparatively little, I have *heard* and *thought* a great deal. I shall be in town at my brother Brinsley's in Grosvenor Square to-morrow and during the week, so if you wish to address me a line on the subject of your petition to Lord M., it will find me there. But, indeed, I think you should want *no* advocate in such a cause, and *if* you do, there cannot be a better than yourself—the winning frankness of whose manner would please him, as I remember it enchanted me.

'If you see Trelawny remember me to him, and say that I executed *his* wish with more alacrity than he has done mine; and that I wish him to send my sketch-book, etc., to Grosvenor Square, or leave them himself.

'I know he has many things just now to attend to for other people, so I do not mean it as a reproach. I was glad Lady D. Campbell won her cause; it is an unjust law which makes a *mother's* claim so vague. I trust your son is well, and in all ways a pleasure and comfort to you.

'Yours very sincerely,

'CAROLINE NORTON.'

But now the first of a long series of trials, scandals, and annoyances was to break out. All these sprang from the same cause, Mr. Norton's unhappy disposition, in conflict with a clever, high-spirited nature, whom all the world but he appreciated. It would seem that he was disappointed in what he expected to receive through his wife's influence, though already much had been done for him. As we have seen, he had set his mind on the trivial privilege of being allowed to bear the prefix of 'Honourable,' though his father had not been a peer; he persisted, and was so importunate that he succeeded finally. Lord Melbourne he wearied out by perpetually recurring demands. There seems something particularly unbecoming in incurring such obligations, founded on the friendship of his wife with the donor.

When he ceased to receive favours from this source, he became angry and uncontrollable. He was conscious moreover of his inferiority, with a natural

jealousy of his wife's gifts and popularity. Long after, stung to madness by her wrongs, she took the public into her confidence. 'I married very young,' she tells us in her well-known pamphlet, 'and my marriage was an unhappy one. My family interfered earnestly and frequently in my behalf; and as for me, I forgave and resented—resented and forgave—till at length I left my husband's for my sister's house. He wrote then adjuring me to pardon him; beseeching me, by all that was holy, "not to crush him," but "to trust to him," to return! He said he "*knelt to me for pardon.*" He wrote to my family in the extremest and most exaggerated terms of submission. He said he was glad they had avenged me and scorned him, and he vowed to treat me kindly for the future. To my lasting injury (even now I will not write to my lasting *regret*) I "condoned." I knew I was not myself faultless. I was deeply touched by his imploring phrases, and I returned to the home and the husband I had abjured.' But a new ground of complaint was speedily found.

It is characteristic that what led to the final quarrel was not suspicion of conduct or conjugal jealousy, but resentment at a fancied insult from Mrs. Norton's family. There was to have been a gathering of relatives at Mr. Sheridan's seat, Frampton, in Wiltshire, to which she was to have taken her three children. Unhappily, it was not thought desirable

to ask Mr. Norton; and, enraged at this slight, he took a mode of punishing the relatives in the person of his wife. He knew the point where to strike, and where she would feel the stroke most keenly. As Sir John Campbell said: 'Notwithstanding her intellectual gifts and the admiration she excited, she was devoted to her babes, and known to have been better contented when she showed them to a visitor, than if she had been decked out in the most costly jewels.' This was remarked by all, and notably by him who on the morning of her departure seized on the children, declaring they should not go with her, and sent them away to Lord Grantley's in the country. The astounding cruelty and brutality of this step, and her complete innocence in the transaction, is shown by a letter written to him only the day before, full of her babes and their artless ways; and written, as was justly said, 'with a playfulness and grace and touching tenderness which belongs to virtue.' 'I was showing,' she wrote to him, 'the opera-glass you gave me to the boys, and Brinsley said, "What do you see?" "I see your dear little dirty face," quoth I. I then handed it to him and said, "What do you see?" "I see *your* dear *big* dirty face," said he. Wasn't it quick and funny? The other laughed amazingly at this filial impertinence. Spencer's good things I must not omit. We were sitting with Charlie, and he was dull. "Now let us resign." "What do you mean?"

said I. "People say *resign* when they *goes* out," quoth he. So much for living with Ministers.'

This playful letter shows that she could not at that moment have anticipated the stroke which was to fall upon her next day. From that time the unfortunate mother was to be deprived of the luxury of seeing her children. From that time, too, it became a sort of passion with her to recover them; and it reads like some tale of romance to follow her eager yearnings, her plots and enterprises, to see them and get them back.

Almost distracted, she now rushed from house to house seeking them, and found them at last in charge of a person who, when she claimed them, threatened to fetch the police. It may be said that such devotion is rarely found in the case of one who has deserted her husband for another, in which case all natural affections seem to be sacrificed together. It was remarkable, indeed, that from Mr. Norton's own counsel later was to come ungrudging testimony to this maternal affection. He declared that he found her 'anxious only on one point, and nearly broken-hearted about it, viz., the restoration of her children. She treated her pecuniary affairs as a matter of perfect indifference, and left me to arrange them with Mr. Norton as I thought fit.'

To the friend before alluded to, and for whom she had a singular affection, that lasted to her death, she described, in a remarkable letter, one

of her attempts to gratify these maternal longings. 'I only saw them by stratagem,' she writes, 'by getting up very early and remaining on the watch near the house till they went out for their morning walk. My eldest, who is seven years old, gave me a little crumpled letter, which he said he had had in his pocket a fortnight, directed to me, but that none of the servants would put it in the post. He was so dear and intelligent, and listened so attentively to all I said to him, that it was a great, though a melancholy, satisfaction to have had this interview. I know he will never forget me.'*

A long and angry correspondence followed between the father and mother. Conditions were offered and rejected, Mr. Norton declaring he would retract any charges he had made, only stipulating that the family should retract charges made against him, and there seemed some chance of arrangement.

While these unpleasant transactions were going on, Mrs. Norton was writing to Mrs. Shelley letters that display the alternations of her mercurial nature :

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* In one letter of great length, addressed to the confidential friend here alluded to, she gives, in a natural, truthful style, a minute account of all the incidents which led to the catastrophe, recounting with bitter penitence her own incautious speeches, which seem to have prompted her husband's proceedings. The letter is of too intimate a character to be given here; but it is clear from it that her love for her children was made use of as her punishment.

'24 Bolton Street will call on 41 D. Park very shortly; but 18 Spring Gardens has set out five or six times for that purpose, and never accomplished it. Distance, mud, fog, friends, business, and pleasure, make calling in London "Kinki Kokki no ga." I believe and hope to be in Bolton Street by Wednesday.

'I enclose what you wish. Lord C. has been very quick in the *lying-in of it;* but I was slow sending to him, thinking he might call, and being so much pressed for time that even a note bothered me to write. What a poetical energy there is in the word "bother"!

'My affairs are, I really think, REALLY ending well. There has been no end of worry and no end of lies; but I trust all is settled or settling. My patient, generous, and enthusiastic son is managing for me. I trust I shall not destroy his faith in my wrongs by a simple love for himself. Excuse the familiar, colloquial English. "Row" and "bother" are homely but satisfactory words.'

There were incidents of a half-grotesque kind connected with these negotiations, which throw further light on this strange character. Mr. Norton suddenly became so eager for a reconciliation that he suggested a meeting at a lonely house in Berkeley Street, where he was to wait for his wife. This rather alarmed her from the coincidence, at the moment, of the Greenacre murder, an idea

which he encouraged by signing himself facetiously 'Greenacre.' She, however, readily met him at his own house, when he humbled himself, and begged that all might be forgotten. She agreed at last to forgive and return to him. But his suspicious temper saw in this only a device to secure a show of triumph over him. He took offence afresh, and on the morning of April 1, 1836, published an insulting advertisement in the papers, proclaiming that she had left his house, and warning all whom it might concern that he would not be answerable for her debts. This and other outrage and violence offer the fairest presumption as to which side was to blame in the long quarrel, with which for many years to come the public were to be only too familiar.

In this almost frantic state of hostility, he next devised a gross and cruel means of destroying the object of his hatred. During their contentions she had been compelled to seek the advice and assistance of friends, such as Sir James Graham, her relation, Colonel Stanhope, and Lord Melbourne. The latter gave her wise and judicious counsel, always deprecating the pushing matters to extremes. 'I have always known,' he wrote to her from Panshanger in the April of 1836, 'that there was a mixture of folly and violence which might lead to any absurdity or any injustice. I have always told you that a woman should never part from her husband whilst she can

remain with him. If this is generally the case, it is particularly so in such a case as yours; that is, in the case of a young, handsome woman, of lively imagination, fond of company and conversation, and whose celebrity and superiority have necessarily created many enemies.' And later he wrote, urging the same prudent counsels: 'If for the sake of your children you think you can endure to return to him, you certainly will act most wisely and prudently for yourself in doing so. Keep up your spirits: agitate yourself as little as possible: do not be too anxious about the rumours and the opinions of "the world." Being (as you are) innocent and in the right, you will in the end bring everything round.'

This was truly kind and even fatherly advice, and inconsistent with the stigma which it was presently sought to affix on his relations with her.

In April, 1836, the town, and indeed the world, was astounded to hear that Mr. Norton, wishing to destroy his wife utterly, had brought an action against the Prime Minister, and asked for large damages as a solace to his feelings. It will be seen, from what has been related, that this was the finishing stroke in the accumulated series of persecutions with which he harassed the unfortunate lady. Party spirit at the moment ran high, and it was felt by both factions that there was even more involved then a mere action at law. The calm consciousness of innocence is clearly shown in a letter which Lord

Melbourne wrote to her at this time, not intended for any eye but her own :

'I hope you will not take it ill if I implore you to try at least to be calm under these trials. You know that what is alleged (if it be alleged) is utterly false, and what is false can rarely be made to appear true. The steps which it will be prudent to take, it will be impossible to determine until we know more certainly the course that is intended to be pursued.' He could not restrain his scorn of his accuser. 'You ought to know him better than I do, and must do so. *But you seem to me to be hardly aware what a* GNOME he is. In my opinion he has somehow or other made this whole matter subservient to his pecuniary interest.'*

'Since first I heard that I was to be proceeded against, I have suffered more intensely than I ever did in my life. I have had neither sleep nor appetite, and I attribute the whole of my illness to the uneasiness of my mind. Now, what is this uneasiness for? Not for my own character, because, as you justly say, the imputation upon me is as nothing. It is not for the political consequences to myself, although I deeply feel the consequences which my indiscretion may bring upon those who are attached to me, and follow my

* These letters and details will be found in Mr. Torrens's 'Life of Lord Melbourne.'

fortunes. The real and principal object of my anxiety and solicitude is you, and the situation in which you have been so unjustly placed by the circumstances which have taken place.'

So acutely did he feel his position that he spoke to the King of resigning. His Majesty, however, warmly dissuaded him from taking such a step; while the Duke of Wellington assured him that he saw no need for such a thing, and handsomely added that he would not join any combination formed to take his place.

This matter has been so often and so freely discussed, even of late years, by Mr. Hayward, Mr. McCullagh Torrens, Lord Campbell, and others, that it cannot now be considered the revival of a scandal which ought to be forgotten. It forms, as we have already seen, a material portion of the history of a persecuted woman, whom even a slight examination of the facts will triumphantly vindicate.

'This trial,' Lord Campbell tells us, 'excited more interest than any other since the beginning of the century, with the exception of Queen Caroline's case. The newspapers had excited expectation by improperly debating the case in anticipation, and making allusion to the sensational character of the evidence to be adduced, and dwelling on certain letters said to have been found by Mr. Norton in

his wife's desk. The excitement had spread to foreign courts, for it was known that the fate of a Ministry depended on the result, and couriers were held ready to start for the principal courts abroad with the news.' The day of trial was June 23, 1836. The counsel for Mr. Norton was Sir W. Follett; and for Lord Melbourne, Sir John (afterwards Lord) Campbell, with Serjeant Talfourd. The defence was conducted with the most admirable tact and ability. But the clever leading counsel had grave forebodings, and the coming trial weighed on his mind. As the day drew nearer, it presented to him an aspect 'more and more disagreeable,' 'although I believe,' he adds, 'in the defendant's protestations of innocence.' Lord Melbourne had suggested a consultation at Downing Street, but the counsel refused to waive the honourable professional rule of the client waiting on the counsel. 'I passed a horrid day,' Lord Campbell tells us, 'and success is not a corresponding reward for my anxiety. I did not till the last know what sort of case was to be made against us, or how it was to be encountered. I was not at all in a good state of mind, or stomach, when my turn came to address the jury; and I was under the most exquisitely painful apprehension that I might not be able to do my duty. However, I got through very well. I conducted the examination of the witnesses with great tact, and my speech, though irregular, was effective.' He felt, he says, like the

Duke of Wellington, not knowing so great a victory had been achieved. 'It so happened that, having lain awake from anxiety the principal part of the night before, I had fallen asleep towards the morning, and I was not called till near the moment fixed for the commencement of the trial, so that I was obliged to hurry away without breakfast, and found the utmost difficulty in obtaining admission to the Court.'

'The trial began at half-past nine. The examination of the plaintiff's witnesses did not conclude till the evening at half-past six. Being somewhat exhausted, and rather afraid that I might not have so favourable a hearing at so late an hour, I proposed an adjournment till the following day. This was opposed by Sir W. Follett, who urged that the defendant's counsel should not have further time to deliberate as to what witnesses they would call.' The Chief Justice and the jury were for going on. 'The jury listened with incredulity and disgust to the evidence, and without requiring to hear a single witness for Lord Melbourne, or without leaving the box, instantly returned a verdict against Mr. Norton.'

Without reviving any of the details—always 'unsavoury'—attention may be directed to one in illustration of the weakness of the case; and amid much that is worthless, this scrap of evidence is worth considering. Great stress had been laid upon the

fact that when Lord Melbourne paid his visits, he always entered in a secret, clandestine fashion. The public door was in Birdcage Walk, but he slunk in by a private entrance in Prince's Court! Now it turned out that the 'secret door' was actually the public one, with 'No. 2' painted on it, and having a bell and knocker, by which visitors and tradesfolks invariably entered. There was an entrance from Birdcage Walk, but it was a private one, having a glass door, and not used by everyone.

The style of testimony may be conceived from a single specimen, that of Fluke, 'the drunken and dismissed coachman,' who described himself as 'prime witness against the Premier of England'; and living in a coal-cellar in Monmouth Street. They did not venture to call him. Campbell's speech can be read now with interest, and is admired for the light and yet masterly style with which it deals with the evidence.

So tragic a business, and involving such serious issues, was to be lightened by a touch of comedy, and in an odd way to be associated with the gifted author of 'Pickwick,' then commencing his career as a reporter for the papers. It was alleged that one of the most substantial foundations of the accusation rested on certain letters discovered by the 'injured husband' among his wife's papers, and these, it was rashly insinuated, would prove of a highly sensational and compromising character. The young writer's

brilliant eyes must have twinkled merrily, as was their wont, when he heard the injured husband's counsel dwell solemnly on this piece of evidence, three of these most important documents being selected and exposed in the most impressive fashion.

'The first,' said Sir William Follett, 'is in these words:

'"*I will call about half-past four.*

'"Yours,

'"MELBOURNE."

'The next:

'"*How are you? I shall not be able to come to-day. I shall to-morrow.*"

'The last:

'"*No House to-day. I will call after the levee.* If you wish it later, let me know. I will then explain about going to Vauxhall.

'"Yours,

'"MELBOURNE."'

When 'Pickwick' was written, a year later, this incident certainly suggested the famous trial; and the three letters of Mr. Pickwick, with the 'Chops and tomato-sauce,' and 'Don't trouble yourself about the warming-pan,' were after the model of Lord Melbourne's. Serjeant Buzfuz's comments on these documents are those of Sir W. Follett, who gravely maintained that 'they showed a great and

unwarrantable degree of affection, because they did not begin and end with the words, "My dear Mrs. Norton;"' adding, 'it seems there may be latent love, like latent heat, in the midst of icy coldness.' So the learned Buzfuz insisted that the allusion to the warming-pan might be 'a cover for latent fire.'* But, as the Serjeant observed, it is ill jesting with an aching heart, and we return again to the triumphant issue of the case. Lord Campbell declared it was the most brilliant event in his career, and that he was almost suffocated with congratulations. The reception he met with as he entered the House of Commons—where, he frankly confessed to his family, he could not resist the temptation of showing himself—has often been described. He details the scene, the cheering beginning when he was first seen, even the Tories affecting to join, though the result was a deep disappointment to them. He admits that the incriminated Minister must have resigned, had the result been otherwise; or if he had remained the stain upon his character must have enfeebled, if not overthrown, his Government.†

* In this delightful book Dickens drew even the names of his characters from other *causes célèbres*. Wardle, Tupman, Snodgrass, and other names are found in the Duke of York's trial; while Dodson and Fogg is the name of the firm of solicitors, slightly altered, in one of the trials connected with 'Orator' Hunt.

† The late Chief Justice Bushe used to relate pleasantly how on the evening of the trial he was wandering through London,

The peroration was admirably adroit and effective: 'I cannot contemplate without deep emotion the effect of your verdict upon the fate of this lady. In the pride of beauty, in the exuberance of youthful spirits, flattered by the admirers of her genius, she may have excited envy, and may not have borne her triumph with uniform moderation and meekness; but her principles have been unshaken, her heart has been pure. As a wife her conduct has been irreproachable; as a mother she has set a bright example to her sex. If necessary,' he put it with exquisite art, admitting levity in her conduct, 'some indulgent allowance might have been asked for her manners without questioning her honour.' And again: 'Her family presents, I believe, an unparalleled instance of genius, being displayed for five successive generations.' After describing their talents in some happy sketches, he came to the third daughter of Tom Sheridan, 'now on her trial before you, for weal or for woe. Through what vicissitudes has she passed! Once a helpless orphan, depending like her sisters on the kindness of relations, she became destined like them to wear a coronet. How brilliant did her lot appear on the

and found himself in the street where Mrs. Norton lived. Half instinctively he stopped, and was looking with curiosity at the house, speculating over the dramatic incidents of the day, when he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was Lord Melbourne. The good-natured nobleman gave him a roguish look: 'What does this mean, Mr. Solicitor?'

morning of the fatal day when she was deprived of her children! Young, beautiful, accomplished, highly connected, enjoying great literary reputation from her works; enjoying what was far more valuable, the esteem and confidence of her husband; her acquaintance courted by poets and statesmen—what must have been her subsequent sufferings? Figure to yourself her surprise and her horror when the charge was first brought against her.' Another passage was more remarkable, as a resort to a mode of vindication rarely offered in a court of law. 'Before I conclude, I am bound, according to the express instructions I received from Lord Melbourne, to declare in his name, and in the most solemn and emphatic manner, that he is not guilty. I know well you cannot act upon this assertion. But look to the evidence.'

That this was no mere oratorical flourish, but an essential element in the defence, is shown by the reiterated and persistent declarations of Lord Melbourne, in the same sense, to the hour of his death. No man of the world or well-trained politician would venture on a course so liable to misconstruction, save from the consciousness of innocence, and a conviction of the injustice of the charge. He again and again, before and after the trial, renewed these assertions.

When Serjeant Wilde declined a retainer because he had returned one on the other side, Lord Mel-

bourne, fancying it was from the hopelessness of the case, sent him a message pledging his honour that justice was on his side. Some years later, when Mrs. Norton applied for the custody of her children, this story was revived, and it was contended that she was not a fit person to have charge of them. It was necessary to meet these imputations in a formal legal way, and Lord Melbourne, though, in blunt fashion, he pronounced it 'confoundedly disagreeable,' again volunteered to swear an affidavit, denying the truth of the accusation. 'The story about me was all a d——d lie, you know. Put that in proper form, and I'll swear it.' Years went by, and he still persisted in reiterating this emphatic statement.

Finally, Mr. Greville, in the second portion of his interesting memoirs, when recording Lord Melbourne's death, tells us of a solemn declaration drawn up, as it were, *in articulo mortis*, and addressed to his brother, Lord Beauvale. There, for the last time, he repeats his statement, clearing Mrs. Norton; and reiterates, on his word as a peer, that there was no foundation for the charge. To impartial minds this carries conviction, and, taken with the verdict of the jury, the case for the prosecution clears Mrs. Norton from the cruel accusation.*

* Mr. Hayward, a good authority in the secret history of the reign, says that Mr. Torrens's account of the action is 'correct in the main.' Mr. Hayward quotes some facts convincing to anyone

It was after this terrible probation, and still filled with the same longing to be allowed to see her children, that she appealed to the clergyman of Duke Street Chapel, the Rev. Mr. Barlow, to act as intercessor, offering every kind of submission or *amende* that could be desired. If she had made any harsh speeches, or declarations that she would not stay with Mr. Norton, she 'repented.' All she asked was a year's trial in his company and that of her children—'an eternal separation from them will *kill* me'—while, as to the late imputations, she protested her complete innocence, offering piteously, if it pleased him, to admit folly and vanity and thoughtlessness. The worthy clergyman made the attempt, as he was desired, but it was fruitless.

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that knew Mrs. Norton. Two of her female servants swore that she was in the habit of rouging; that she always put on rouge when Lord Melbourne was expected, etc. One of the jury, who was acquainted with her, told Mr. Hayward that this convinced him they were lying, and lying spitefully in concert.

The witnesses were chiefly discarded servants, nearly all of damaged character, who had been for a considerable time before kept out of the way at the country seat of Lord Grantley. At the close of the plaintiff's case, the Attorney-General asked for an adjournment, but on an intimation from the jury he did not press it, and proceeded to analyze the evidence.

Mr. Hayward adds, however, that the well-meant zeal of the jury turned out mistaken zeal, for it had been better that the trial had been adjourned, and the witnesses for the defence had been called. It could have been proved that during the entire period during which she was incriminated by the servants, Mrs. Norton was suffering from a serious illness, was shut up in her room, and had seen no one but her physician and her servants.

In the flush of the acquittal she wrote to her fast and firm friend, Mrs. Shelley :

'Hampton Court, Saturday, June 25.

'DEAR MRS. SHELLEY,—Thank you for writing to me. My friends are very kind, but it is impossible not to feel bitterly the disgusting details of that unhappy trial.

'You will see, if you have read it, that the girl, *Eliza Gibson*, deposes that every day, or *generally* every day, during the months of July, August, and September. 1833, I was occupied *painting and sinning. In that August my youngest child was born, and during that September I was on the sofa!* and when I was able to move I went to Worthing with my children. She says, too, that Mr. Norton examined her; and he allowed her evidence to be brought forward against me, *knowing it not only to be a lie*, but a lie which the parish register, or the nurse, who sat in the witness-room, could contradict in a moment.

'Well, a woman is made a helpless wretch by these laws of men, or she would be allowed a *defence*, a counsel, in such an hour. I was in Spring Gardens; I could send notes to disprove the evidence of each witness, and they were of no use unless they bore upon the *defendant's* case. To go *for nothing*, in a trial which decides one's fate for life, is hard.

'However, it is past, and I am very thankful. I

have not yet heard what is to become of my poor boys; but I am not now obliged to remain *inactive* as before. I have been very seriously ill ever since that day and half a night of terrible suspense.

'I can say nothing more at present, therefore I will conclude by thanking you once more for the kind interest you have shown, and promising to send you news of what is settled to be done.

'I suppose your son is not with you yet. I hope he will always be a pleasure and a pride to you who have so much of "the mother" in your heart; and am (stupefied and beat),

'Yours very truly,

'CAROLINE NORTON.'

Nothing was more remarkable than how in this and successive troubles friends stood by her, whose devotion she ever recollected. One of these true sympathizers was the late Duchess of Sutherland, whose service she recalled to Lord Ronald Gower, in an affectionate letter on the occasion of his mother's death:

'If to have loved and admired your dead mother more than anyone I ever knew, except my sister Helen, could give me a place in her children's remembrances, I can lay claim to such a recollection, even at this mournful and sacred time. However often one may have seen, however well one may have known a dear and familiar friend, I think there

is always one occasion in which the face and form become, as it were, more visible to memory, as if the picture were taken then. I see for ever, in thinking of her, her pitying face, smilingly looking down on my boy, who was trying to thank her for all her goodness to me; and as she stood drawing off a ring from her finger, which she gave to him, she was the very ideal of grace and beauty, of loving kindness of soul.'

And three or four years after the trial, Mrs. Norton expressed her grateful feelings in the poem of 'The Dream,' which she inscribed to the Duchess in these genuine, pathetic, and truly poetical lines:

'And unto thee—the beautiful and pure—
Whose lot is cast amid that busy world
Where only sluggish Dulness dwells secure,
And Fancy's generous wing is faintly furled;
To thee—whose friendship kept its equal truth
Through the most dreary hour of my embitter'd youth—
I dedicate the lay. . . . .

* * * * * *

'For easy are the alms the rich man spares
To sons of Genius, by misfortune bent,
But thou gav'st *me*, what woman seldom dares,
Belief—in spite of many a cold dissent—
When, slandered and maligned, I stood apart
From those whose bounded power had wrung, not crush'd, my heart.

'Thou, then, when cowards lied away my name,
And scoff'd to see me feebly stem the tide;
When some were kind on whom I had no claim,
And some forsook on whom my love relied,
And some, who *might* have battled for my sake,
Stood off in doubt to see what turn the world would take—

'Thou gav'st me that the poor do give the poor,
Kind words and holy wishes, and true tears;
The lov'd, the near of kin, could do no more,
Who chang'd not with the gloom of varying years,
But clung the closer when I stood forlorn,
And blunted Slander's dart with their indignant scorn.

'For they who credit crime are they who feel
Their *own* hearts weak to unresisted sin;
Memory, not judgment, prompts the thoughts which steal
O'er minds like these, an easy faith to win;
And tales of broken truth are still believ'd
Most readily by those who have *themselves* deceiv'd.

'But like a white swan down a troubled stream,
Whose ruffling pinion hath the power to fling
Aside the turbid drops which darkly gleam,
And mar the freshness of her snowy wing,—
So thou, with queenly grace and gentle pride,
Along the world's dark waves in purity dost glide.'

One of Mrs. Norton's friends—the wife of an accomplished and popular man, known to all leading spirits of his generation—has recently recalled for me the impressions left on her by this gifted woman. 'I wish,' she writes, 'I could give a sufficient idea of her striking personality at that frightful crisis of her young womanhood. She was about twenty-eight then, in the superb summer of her beauty, with every gift and faculty of her mind and spirit at their highest power. It moves me now, at the distance of so many years, to think of the ruin of her life worked out by her inveterate enemies. Her heart was wrung by her boys being torn from her; and after the verdict in her favour, when she had

every right to have them with her, at least for their holidays, they were sent from place to place, and she was kept in ignorance of their well-being, and all concerning them. The second boy died in early boyhood from a fall from his pony ; Fletcher, and I think Charles (afterwards Lord Grantley), lived on to manhood.

'The little witticisms and satirical speeches, which cost her dear when they fell on jealous ears, notably on her husband's, have not been gathered up, I fancy. Her voice was most exquisitely musical, and every possible expression—grave, gay, ironical, melancholy, sportive, indignant, proud, tender—flitted across her fine face as she talked ; and naturally, the essence of her talk lost its most effective charm when recorded in black and white. She was untiring as a writer, literally working for her bread.' After this affectionate and pleasing sketch, the writer proceeds to describe her in the year 1874, when she was at Torquay with her grandchildren, where she was 'writing away industriously to pay for a tutor for the boy ; and though nearly seventy, was still beautiful and full of life and power.'

When all her efforts had failed, and all hope of being reunited to her loved children appeared lost, she seemed to sink into a state of dull resignation. To the same attached friend, whom she had known as a child, she now opened her heart ; and, in reply

to some affectionate counsels as to seeking comfort and peace in submission to the will of God, she wrote this very remarkable letter :

'Hampton Court, October 4th.

'Very cold and very proud would the heart be, dearest ———, which could take amiss your gentle observations, even were they less stamped with the truth of religion than those made in your last letter. Do not think that I have not already *felt* their truth from my inmost soul, and if I have not expressed my convictions, it is partly that mine have been long letters of sorrowful complaint and explanation, and partly that the *habits* of a worldly life make me reluctant to affirm as my *sentiments* that which must appear a strong contrast to my *actions*. Even when living flattered in my own "set" (that narrow circle, of which I think *Madame de Staël* says that "they stand round us, and hide the rest of the world"), I had many things to remind me of holier and higher objects ; and you do not know how very little all the admiration or court which can be paid, can make up for unhappiness *at home*. Many and many a night have I gone out, to prove that I *could* go always to such and such places, and laughed restlessly after I got there, to prove mortification and sorrow could not reach *me*—when I could have laid my head on my hands and heard no more of what was going on than one hears in the vague murmurs

of a waterfall. Many nights, especially in the last year, since my great *break* with my husband, I give you my word that I have been unable to collect myself to *answer to the purpose* those who addressed me, and I have felt so irritable at the consciousness that I could not, and so afraid of the sneering smile which I thought I perceived now and then on the faces of my acquaintances, that I have gone away almost immediately after arriving, unfit and unable to go through my evening's "pleasure." It is impossible to have felt all this, and not also to have felt occasionally a remorse for wasted time and all the wasted energies of life; and it is against my *better* thoughts, and not my *worse*, that I have had most to struggle. I have felt and said to myself, "Surely this is an irrational, un-Christian, miserable way of passing one's life." And then again rose Vanity, and whispered, "If you do not go here and there it will only be supposed you were not *asked*." And then the false aims and multitude of *small ends* to be compassed! Oh!—depend on it, there is no treadmill like the life of a "Woman of the World," and you see it in the expression of the face. It is not *late hours* that bring the jaded, anxious, restless look; on the contrary, I believe you might sit up till morning, singing till the lark interrupted you, and be none the worse. It is the perpetual struggle to *be* and to *do*, and the internal and continual dissatisfaction with all one *is* and *does*, that

eats away the freshness of one's life. I do not know if you saw the "Keepsake" for this year, and you will perhaps think it very ridiculous of me to refer to my own poetry, but I never wrote anything more from *my heart* than the description, written more than a year ago, of the print of "Fashion's Idol," in that book :

> '"Nor found in all that rabble rout,
> Whose selfish pleasures only cloy,
> *One* heart that cheered us on in doubt,
> Or in our triumph gave us joy."

Well, it is over now, and I may well say that I feel the truth of your observations on adversity being good for us, when I tell you that I feel more thankful to God, more conscious how many *many* blessings have fallen to my share, at this time of sorrow—of the only REAL sorrow (but *one*) of my life—than I ever did in the days of my *murmuring* prosperity.

'I am sure you will be glad to hear that I had news of my children two days since, through my widowed sister-in-law, to whom Mr. Norton's youngest sister wrote a long and satisfactory account of them (I hope and think with the *intention* that it should be communicated to me). I have written to this sister. The hope of her answering is something to *look forward to*.'

Unfortunately his defeat in the trial only inflamed the animosity of her persecutor. His next step was

to notify to her that her family might support her, that she might 'write for her bread,' and that her children were by law at his disposal. Now recommenced the unseemly struggle for the children, while the unfortunate lady, making every exertion to support herself by writing for her bread, found herself in debt and difficulty, owing to the withdrawal of the support to which she was entitled. No literary hack could have laboured harder than she now did, editing 'Keepsakes,' and such works, writing articles, poems, etc., with unflagging industry. But for her children she yearned, and was willing to make every sacrifice or submission to secure their companionship. When all these efforts failed, in her desperation she ventured on a scheme that seems almost romantic. Of what kind it was will be gathered from the following passages from her letters to Mrs. Shelley:

'My hope was to come peaceably to an agreement. I will not say to *outwit* him, but to SECURE the boys. There is no length of desperation or of meanness that one may not be driven to in my situation.'

* * * * *

'I believe I shall be baffled after all,' she wrote from 49, Grosvenor Place. 'I begin to think the children are already moved. I was here by eight or nine last night. One is always longer than one expects getting away from a house.'

* * * * *

'I failed. I saw them all: carried Brin to the gate: could not open it, and was afraid they would tear *him* in pieces, they caught him so fiercely. And the elder one was so frightened he did not follow.

'It may be a sin, but I do curse them, and their dogged brutality: if *a strong arm had been with me*, I should have done it.

'I tell you this, because I know you have a real wish to know.'

* * * * *

'Thanks for your kind efforts about the chicks: they were gone to Scotland the very evening I first laid all my plans! It shows the spite, the carelessness of all but the desire to torment *me* that they have been sent off thus, without a soul even of their father's family to take care of them—no one but the Highland nurse, ignorant and violent. *No one* could get at them now: we must watch until they are come to Edinburgh.'

When Mrs. Norton's embarrassments increased, and her husband owed her at least three years' income, amounting to £1,500, tradesmen brought actions against him to recover what was due to them from his wife. His defence was to 'subpœna' her publishers, and demand an account of the profits she made by her pen. Clerks were sent to examine her bankers' books, to see if she were so helpless as she represented. The Court, it seems, decided

that he had some sort of claim on her exertions. On which occasion the persecuted woman made this bitter commentary: 'Meanwhile he has a lien in the copyright of my works. Let him claim the copyright of THIS, and let the Lord Chancellor—the "Summus Cancellarius"—cancel in Mr. Norton's favour, according to the laws and customs of this realm of England, my right to the labour of my brain and pen, and docket it among forgotten Chancery papers, with a parody of Swift's contemptuous labelling—"Only a woman's pamphlet."'

Mrs. Norton soon, however, took higher ground than the vindication of her own private wrongs; and we find her later taking up the question of the hardships from which her sex suffered owing to the general unfairness of the laws as to a wife's property. These she seriously studied, and appealed to the public in some stirring pamphlets, in which she discussed the question, drawing illustrations of the hardships of the case from her own sad story. In two characteristic letters she unfolded her plan to her friend, Mrs. Shelley:

'My children are still in the hands of their Scotch relations, and I hear nothing of them.'

She then proceeds to unfold her future plans:

'I have suffered and do suffer so much mentally and bodily, that I regret I ever allowed the children to go out of my reach; though taking them would have

entailed the necessity of leaving all my own people, and living abroad. I am about to publish "Observations on the Natural Claim of a Mother to the Custody of her Infant Children," in which, among other cases, I have given my own. I think there is too much fear of publicity about women; it is reckoned such a crime to be *accused*, and such a disgrace, that they wish nothing better than to hide themselves and say no more about it. I think it is high time that law was *known*, at least among the "weaker" sex, which gives no right to one's own flesh and blood; and I shall follow that with "A Comparison between the English and Scotch Law of Divorce," as affecting the possibility of defence on the part of the woman.

'This occupies my restlessness, which is very great, and of that painful, hopeless sort which has no aim or object.

'I heard from *Mrs. Gore* (do you know her?) that ——— only gave £120 for her three vols.; you know he gives Lady Blessington £800 and £1,000; but he says "some allowance should be made for the *éclat* of publishing for the Countess." I would have burnt my "Sybil Leaves" immediately.

'I see Fanny Butler is come to England, so I suppose Trelawny still lingers here, and is in a very wild and happy state of enthusiasm. I have not heard of him for a long time. How does little Zella get on?'

'Wilts, January 5th.

'DEAR MRS. SHELLEY,—I have been a very wretch from rheumatism in the head and weakness in the eyes, or would sooner have answered your kind and welcome letter.

'I finished my "Observations on the Natural Claim of the Mother" last week, and it is now printing at Ridgeway's; there is so much dispute and worry about prosecutable passages, that I have ordered them to print *now* 500 copies as for *private* (!) circulation; and when I am in town, which will be the end of this month, I can see to the *publication* of it. I also intend, if possible (and what is there *not* possible in this world?), to have a discussion of the alteration of that law in Parliament this Session. I am very impatient to send you the pamphlet; it was a great triumph to me to see how *alike* what I had written and part of your letter was. (What very awkward prose!) I improved the passage materially by your observation on *what was* PERMITTED *to women, or rather* EXCUSED *in women, when they receive any rudeness;* but as you are to have the trouble of reading it in print, I will not say more about it now. Perhaps you will not think I have gone *far enough;* I thought it best to have the appearance of calmness and fairness, and I struck out many passages which my sister, Georgina Seymour, called my "callow-nestling" bits: and I insisted on the rule *already existent for illegitimate*

*children*, that children under the age of seven should belong, *at all events*, to the mother; and *after that*, *access* dependent not on the father, but on the Court of Chancery. God knows if that Court judged the conduct of women by the same rules as they do that of men, and pronounced as indulgent opinions, we should be happily protected. Conceive, in one of the cases I had from the Law Reports, the mother being obliged to leave her child in the hands of the husband's mistress—and the Court saying it had no *power* to interfere! was there ever such a perversion of natural rights? And yet those very Courts assume they *have* a power in cases of *opinion* on the father's part. The fact is, in this "commercial country," as it is eternally called, the rights of *property* are the only rights really and efficiently protected; and the consideration of property the only one which weighs with the decision made in a court of justice. I do not mean that they decide *unjustly in favour of the rich*, but that where there is no property *law fails;* as if it was for *that*, and not for *men*, that laws were made. The great obstacle, in all the cases I have looked through, to the woman obtaining her child, or even obtaining that it should be placed in the hands of a third party as proper guardian, has been the *want of property* to justify the interference of the law.

'I also was much struck and affected by the "simple story" conveyed in all Mrs. Hemans's letters.

I have a letter somewhere containing an account of the boy *Charles*, which she wrote me when I was editress of that magazine, written in a true mother's spirit; and, indeed, the mother must be a very fond one who will so trust to the interest of an *utter stranger*, as to describe and expatiate upon the qualities of some "little unknown." I never saw her; but I think, of all people, she would least have disappointed those who had known her *first* by her writings: there was something *German* in her very soul, simple, noble, and full of a kindly and soaring spirit. As to Mr. C——'s portion of the work, he perhaps felt that he might be more abused for showing any *vanity of authorship* in a task of that sort, than for being meagre in his additions. There is also the difficulty of being compelled to *omit* the greater part of her biography, as it is necessarily entwined with family matters." After dwelling on certain rumours and other matters of a private kind, she goes on: " The very vague manner in which he mentions the husband going to Italy for his health, and her remaining in England because of her *literary avocations*, made me almost smile. Fancy *any* woman—and more especially *such* a woman—staying to print poetry, while her husband went to die in Italy! The thing is absurd. One would not do it even by a husband one did not love.

'Did you observe the memorandum for a poem?

the sorceress who gave up one by one all her gifts to secure the love of a mortal, and was abandoned by him at last? I mean to seize it as my inheritance; though after that most lovely and undervalued creation, Gwendolen, in "Triermain," anything of that sort must seem a copy. Does it not provoke you sometimes to think how "in vain" the gift of genius is for a woman? how so far from binding her more closely to the admiration and love of her fellow-creatures, it does, in effect, create that gulf across which no one passes? and all to be forgotten. Witness its being impossible to find out when or how *Aspasia* died, who I believe to have been Pericles's superior in all things except "the power to steer the ship" of which you speak.

'I have been interrupted by letters, which by recalling to me all that is *real* and *grating* in my position, and obliging me to answer lawyers, etc., cut short that which is pleasant—which is writing to *you*. I will, therefore, only add a wish to know how Percy acquitted himself at his Cambridge dinner: do not mind his shyness. I believe what Lord M. once said of it, that "a certain *sort* of shyness is not only a *concomitant*, but a *proof* of real genius." That "certain sort of shyness" I take to be *sauvagerie*, a feeling of not being able immediately to amalgamate with other and new associates, because of something different from and superior to the common nature in one's own mind, which *though*

one feels, one is afraid of showing; perhaps from being *instinctively conscious* that it *is* an assertion of superiority (and, consequently, an *insult* offered to the new acquaintance); perhaps from that dread of sympathy which makes one's soul so often creep back like a snail into its shell, from the approach of unknown substances which *may* wound. I think there is a lingering touch of it in *you*, in spite of the freest, frankest, and prettiest manner that ever took my fancy, and I have felt it myself very often. The EVIDENCE of this *shyness of spirit* wears off, and it is better that it should (as it is better the foot should harden for walking); but the thing itself, depend on it, is a proof of being more perfectly and delicately tuned, and so more easily *jarred* than other and coarser instruments.

'With most earnest wishes that you may be the mother of a celebrated man, whose fame shall not depend on the few eager struggling years of a restless youth, like him too early taken away, and with kind but hurried good wishes for your health and happiness during "the new year" now begun,

'Believe me ever yours truly,

'CAROLINE NORTON.'

'16, Green Street, Grosvenor Square, Feb. 1st.

'DEAR MRS. SHELLEY,—I have been *expecting* to write to you *every day*. I put it off because I thought to send my pamphlet. My pamphlet must

still *follow* my letter. There was such a division in my family as to what I might and what I might *not* do, and such an outcry about "the indelicacy of public appeal," that I delayed the press, hoping to be able to *win over* my people to my views. *To-night* Talfourd ("blessed be his name for that same, and a crown of glory to him," as the Irish say) *has given notice of a motion in the House of Commons to alter this law.* I thought you would be glad to know this, both for the sake of the *sex* (whom you have not the "clever woman's affectation" of thinking inferior to men) and for *me*, whose first glad feeling for many months of struggling has been the public notice of an *effort* at least to be made in behalf of mothers. I do not know Mr. Talfourd personally, but I asked Mr. Hayward (who seems a great friend of his) to request him to undertake the task. I hardly hoped for such prompt acquiescence; and if *I* had to choose from the whole House of Commons, I could not choose a man whose talent, good feeling, and *weight* with the House would give a better or so good a chance of success. He has the printed proof of my pamphlet. As soon as another is struck off to correct the last few errors, I will send you a *tidy* copy; only, as I have now attained my great object of having it discussed in Parliament, and as *some* of my family are so averse to my writing on the subject, I shall only give a *very few* copies—half a dozen, perhaps, out of

my own family—and you will not *lend it*, to oblige me.

'I am afraid you were displeased with one sentence in my last letter; I think I was misunderstood, but I will not make awkward attempts at explanation. I wrote *very* hurriedly, and meant only to express kind wishes and sincere ones; though I believe you have some doubts of my general sincerity, in spite of my conviction that living in the world only alters the *manner* and not the feelings. I wish to God it *did* the latter, and perhaps I should not be so wretched just now. From which "just now" I except to-day, for to-day the sunshine has slanted in at the windows of my heart, and I look forward to this motion of Talfourd with an eagerness I have wasted on many less worthy and less earnest hopes.

'I shall not write any more, my hand and head being equally tired with letters, and two o'clock (after midnight) having just sounded. I hope you will soon be in town, and that I shall see something of you. I hear you will be nearer me by a good deal than when Belgrave Place was your dwelling-place.

'I never felt so fagged in all my life.

'Yours ever truly,

'CAROLINE N.'

It would be monotonous to pursue the stages of the unequal contest continued through seventy years

more. It was but natural that on her side it should be attended by some loss of that delicate shrinking from publicity so becoming in a woman; and as the struggle became more and more envenomed, she seemed as eager as he was to make the public acquainted with the whole story of her 'wrongs.' This soon fatigues, and involves a loss of sympathy. As the charges and recriminations are iterated and reiterated, the involuntary comment is, 'A plague on both your Houses!' and, grown indifferent at the too frequent appearance of the heading, 'The Hon. Mr. Norton and his wife,' no one cared to apportion the balance of blame. In 1855 she took the imprudent step of addressing a 'Letter to the Queen,' relating the whole story of her treatment and persecution. The violence of language in this production, the unsparing vituperation, and the revelation of family matters, made the judicious grieve. Allowance must be made for the long course of exasperation pursued towards her for so many years. Her pamphlets were—'English Law for Women,' issued in 1854; 'The Letter to the Queen' in 1855; and one on 'The Separation of Mother and Child, by Pierce Stevenson.'*

* This produced a libellous article in a contemporary review, in which she was assailed in scurrilous terms as 'a she-devil.' She wished to prosecute, but found that she would be obliged 'to join' her husband with herself.

Her latter days were shadowed by other troubles. One of her sons had married in Italy a person much below his station, and his health and his children became a source of increasing and recurring anxieties. Her friends will remember how courageously she was ready to set off on the shortest notice for Italy, on the news of some sudden illness of the father. The children she often had with her, and appeared to dote on them. She seemed always to maintain an undaunted spirit, and the same pleasant tone of *persiflage*, half ironical, which gave such a flavour to her talk. What struck those who became acquainted with her at this time was her good-nature.

It may be conceived that such a nature as hers, joined to so adventurous a life, must have had a fascination for those who study human character, and the combinations which operate so strongly on it. In one of the too short but brilliant series of stories, which enjoy a more enduring favour than is the fate of ordinary fiction, there is found a figure which has been recognised as, or at least presumed to be intended for, Mrs. Norton. In 'Diana of the Crossways,' Mr. George Meredith has drawn her *con amore*, but with such variations as the skilled novelist finds necessary for his purpose. A transaction in which the heroine turns the discovery of political secrets to her own profit, has been assumed to be drawn from real experience. Unreasonably it would seem, for a writer may find

inspiration in a character of real life, and introduce it into a plot of his own contrivance, without its being taken for granted that every incident has happened. But, as I have said, characters of this description present much the same attraction to a writer, as a character does in some fine comedy.*

In February, 1875, Mr. George Norton died. It was an odd retribution that he who had sought so eagerly the privilege of wearing the mere title of 'Honourable' should actually depart this life on the eve of the death of his brother, when he might have succeeded to more substantial advantages. His widow had long been acquainted with an accomplished and elegant scholar, Mr. (later Sir William) Stirling Maxwell, of Keir, who to fine taste joined much Spanish scholarship, and was besides an amiable and justly esteemed man. This gentleman she married on March 1, 1877. This happy change

* The author often met her at this period when she was comparatively in her decay, and was struck by her buoyancy of tone, her fine, nobly-classical head and abundant tresses, now slightly iron grey in tint. It was plainly to be seen that children and their ways were her delight; hence it could be understood how cruelly she must have suffered when deprived of her own. On the whole case I may add, that after perusal of a large number of the most confidential letters, in which every proceeding of hers is minutely related, I found it impossible not to arrive at the conclusion that she had behaved all through with the most perfect propriety, forbearance and generosity, and that any little excess or warmth of language was owing to the unkindness with which she had been treated.

in her position, however, she was destined to enjoy but a short period, for in the same year she died. Her husband only survived until 1878. The life of this accomplished lady had been a weary one indeed. To the last she pursued her literary labours, furnishing to the Press articles of the old grace and finish, and fulfilling her duties heroically. Such was the granddaughter of Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

There were two brothers of Mrs. Norton, Charles and Frank, who, apart from their name, appear to have inspired an interest in those who knew them. My friend Mr. William Le Fanu, a Commissioner of the Board of Works at Dublin, who has himself inherited no mean share of the family gifts, supplies the following sketches of these and other members of the family. 'Charles Sheridan,' he writes, 'Mrs. Norton's youngest brother, died of consumption, I am sure, quite thirty years or more ago. He was very handsome and very witty; so was Frank, an elder brother of his, who was private secretary to Lord Normanby, when he was Lord-Lieutenant here. He, too, died of consumption some years before the death of Charles. Her eldest brother is the only one of the family living; he was very handsome. He made a great match: he ran away with the only child of Sir Colquhoun Grant. Mrs. Norton had three sons, one of whom, Willie, was killed by a fall from his pony when a schoolboy, or rather died some time after from the effects

of the fall. The eldest was Fletcher, a very dear friend of mine, very handsome, clever, and one of the sweetest and gentlest creatures I ever knew. When last I saw him he was first *attaché* to the Embassy at Paris, and soon after was appointed Secretary of Legation at Athens. His health had been delicate for some time, and before he took up his post at Athens he died in Paris in October, '59. Some years before that he had become a Roman Catholic. Mrs. Norton sent me a long letter, giving an account of his last days. At the end she says, "There he lay quite still leaning on my bosom, breathing fainter and fainter till he died; we could scarcely tell *when* he died, but the restlessness, the sadness, and the ecstasy all passed out of his face, and there was nothing but peace; and we had only to close his beautiful soft eyes, that from the hour they opened on this world had never looked hardly, scornfully, or unkindly on any human being. I am thankful, when so many women have soldier sons dying far away from them, I was permitted to witness this blessed and gentle creature go from us in such peace." The remaining son was kindly, clever, handsome, but wild; he it was who married a peasant girl in Capri. She was considered the beauty of the island, being a blonde, but she was in reality by no means a beauty. I knew her well; she was a quiet, harmless, fair-haired, and very un-Italian-looking young woman. *He* became Lord Grantley shortly

before his death, which occurred in 1877. She is still alive. Of their marriage there were two children, a boy and girl—the boy is now Lord Grantley. I have not seen him since he was a boy, good-looking and fair; the girl, Carlotta, was very Italian-looking, a very proud girl. They both lived, when children, with Mrs. Norton.

'My dear friend the late Sir Wm. Stirling Maxwell, of Keir, whom you no doubt knew, and who was a delightful companion, had just taken out Carlotta to her mother at Capri in 1878, and on his return was seized with typhoid fever at Venice, where he died amongst strangers. Mrs. Lewis Wingfield, Lord Castletown's sister, happened to be staying at the Lana Hotel in Venice, and hearing that this Englishman was alone and dying, did everything she could for him. You will be tired of this long epistle, but they were all very dear to me.'*

* The reader will hardly agree with this modest self-deprecation. A letter of 'Frank' Sheridan's will give an idea of his lively nature:

'My dear J.,—If you will read the report of the Literary Fund dinner in the *Morning Post* of Monday, you will see that the writer (who, from the folly and malevolence of the article I take to be L * * *) has stated that Lord Mulgrave sat still, etc., when the Queen's health was proposed. Now you know that after the King's salubrity has been eulogized in a becoming quantity of cheers, no one's health is drank uproariously except such as are present at the dinner—this was intended, and ought to have been the case when Adelaide's health was drank. But there were

Charles Sheridan, Richard Brinsley's brother, died in 1806, leaving a family. One of his sons was a brilliant young man, and had he lived would have illustrated further the talent of the race. He had been sent to India in the Company's service, where he displayed remarkable gifts. His uncle Chamberlain, who had an unbounded admiration for the genius displayed by the family, declared 'that if he had lived he would have been a second Sir William Jones,' from his knowledge of Indian languages and manners. As it was, he was an honour

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people present (and I heard before the feast that there were to be) who wished to turn the hilarity of the evening into a political squabble. Hence that foolish piece of spite in its appropriate journal, the *Morning Post*. The Queen (God bless her !), whose taste in literature is undoubted, spells through its columns every day ; nor did she omit to do so last Monday ; the consequence was, that she complained of Lord Mulgrave's neglect in cheering, as it was there asserted. He is annoyed at this, and wishes it to be contradicted, as he behaved most loyally on the occasion, the only mistake being that which I mentioned, of not thinking it necessary to depart from the established rules of toast-giving. Therefore do you, like a good soul, in your report of the dinner to-morrow, take up your goose-quill in his defence, and state how absurd and mischievous the report must have been : so shall you acquire κυδος and thanks. I enclose a slip of correspondence, which I have just received from our friend Tyrone, and have put his friend's name down for the club ; so add to your favours by shoving your name under mine.

'Farewell !

'Yours affectionately,

'FRANK SHERIDAN.

'Friday, 13th June, 1834.'

to human nature, and the flower of all the Sheridan family. According to the same authority his superiors pronounced that his talents and abilities were equal to those of the most celebrated of that family, and his goodness was even superior to his talents. There was much truth in this last praise, for he displayed the sympathetic affection which belonged to the race, attended by that practical exertion without which such feelings are worthless. His brother, Charles Robert, died before him, leaving debts and a family. When the news of his father's death reached Charles, he wrote to Mr. Chamberlain and conjured him, 'by the friendship he possessed for him, to procure him the most minute and accurate account he could collect on every source, which it was his intention to liquidate as far as his emoluments would allow of, with all interest.' It happily proved, however, that this gentleman had died without owing anything. Charles, however, took care of his mother and sisters, and of the retainers. He had been despatched as Secretary to Sir Harford Jones on his mission to Persia, and died, when returning, at Shiraz on September 6, 1812.

Sheridan's two sisters were married, each to a gentleman of the family of Le Fanu, of an old French stock long settled in Dublin. One of these ladies, Elizabeth, is described as being 'the elegant authoress' of 'Lucy Ormond,' and the 'Indian

Voyage,' works that do not appear to have made any profound impression.*

* She seems to have been a person of sagacity and judgment, of which qualities her brother-in-law, Mr. Chamberlain, gives a little scene as a specimen :

'In the year 1782, when dining at the house of Charles Sheridan and his sister, then Betsy Sheridan, we proposed going to the play. She took me with her to her own private box, in Smock Alley Theatre. "Do you observe," she said, "that young lady standing by the wing nearest the stage door?" "The little young lass, do you mean?" "Yes," said she. "That little girl, if she lives, will be, some time or other, the first comic actress in England or Ireland. She is a Miss Francis. She has not been long on the stage, but for chastity of acting, *naïveté*, and *being* the character she represents, young as she is, she surpasses what could have been expected of so young a performer." This was twenty-two years ago, and the young girl of whom so favourable a prognostic was made, was the well-known Mrs. Jordan.'

This lady had a daughter, Alicia, who was considered to give promise of success in authorship, though this does not seem to have been fulfilled. This belief was shared by the too sanguine uncle Chamberlain, who seems to have been somewhat eccentric in his ideas. He thought so highly of some early production of hers, that he took the odd course of forwarding it to the editor of a magazine, guarded with a singular proviso. It was, he said, 'the production of the daughter of Mrs. Le Fanu, of Kingsbridge, in Devonshire, and niece of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, now aged thirteen years. It was not to be brought to light now, but to be carefully put by in case she should ever in process of time arrive at celebrity as an authoress.' These promising abilities seem to have expended themselves in little beyond a life of Mrs. Sheridan, Richard Brinsley's mother—an ordinary performance, whose style, in parts, recalls curious memories of her father.

# CHAPTER XIV.

## 'THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY' AND OTHER SHERIDANS.

We now turn to consider the course and career of another of the beautiful sisters, the well-known 'Queen of Beauty.' We have seen her with her family in the modest house at Great George Street, sharing the admiration of all that was witty and intellectual. In June, 1830, she was married to Lord Seymour, later St. Maur, eldest son of the Duke of Somerset, having made what was reckoned a brilliant 'match.' Her life might thus appear to have opened under the most favourable auspices; yet, like her sister Caroline's, it was destined to be one of trial and sorrow, chiefly in connection with her children.

She is best known by her appearance at the famous gala held in the year 1839, the 'Eglinton Tournament.' A young Scotch nobleman conceived the idea of reviving the old jousts of chivalry on a magnificent scale. With this view, in the month of August, all the leading persons in the kingdom were invited to Eglinton Castle in Ayr-

shire, where the most costly and magnificent preparations were made for their entertainment. About half a mile from the castle an immense enclosure was formed for holding the lists, with galleries that held 1,000 and 2,000 persons respectively. Two magnificent salons, one a ball-room, the other a banqueting-hall, were built specially. All the costumiers of the kingdom were laid under contribution, and suits of real armour were furbished up, for it was intended that the rough and dangerous 'jousting' should be carried out in earnest. Unfortunately the reckoning had been made without reference to the uncertain Scotch climate, and the great day, which was August 28th, was ushered in with a steady downpour of rain, and with the most disastrous results. There were no signs of a break, and after waiting almost till evening the procession had to set out in the wet. The beautiful granddaughter of Sheridan was to be the presiding 'Queen of Beauty,' but instead of figuring in the brilliant procession mounted on her 'palfrey,' she had to be conveyed to the scene in a close carriage. All the galleries were filled, and presented an array of umbrellas, anything but a spectacle of chivalry. Still the ladies were splendidly arrayed in costumes of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The knights in armour included the host himself, Lords Waterford, Alford, Craven, Sir Frederick Johnstone, Sir Francis Hopkins, and others of less degree.

Lord Eglinton's splendid seat and fine 'brass armour' won much applause; as did his exertions in the lists, where 'he broke a couple of spears' with opponents, and was declared the victor, receiving a crown from the presiding 'Queen of Beauty.' The rain, however, was persistent, and prevented any real business being done; and the show was at last reduced to an exhibition of sword-play between Mackay, an actor, and a soldier. Next day the weather was almost as bad, but cleared up a little to allow of some mimic contests on foot between Prince Louis Napoleon and Mr. Lamb. It was discovered now that the ball-room and banqueting-hall had become a complete wreck, the rain pouring in and drenching all with water. An animating diversion occurred in the contests with swords, which were limited by rule to a regulated number of cuts. This encounter, which was maintained by the impetuous Lord Waterford and another knight, Lord Alford, became so warm and excited as to take the shape of a serious battle, and was only stopped by the interference of the Lord Marshal of the tourney. Nothing, however, could restore the general spirit of the affair, which gradually languished. The freak was said to have cost the young nobleman £40,000. The feature of the whole, however, was the 'Queen of Beauty,' who received and rewarded successful knights. She no doubt proved to be the one agreeable memory of

the affair. For the brief reign of the 'Queen of Beauty' was long associated with her name.

But the romance and sentiment of her life were not to overpower the element of gaiety and comedy with which they seemed to be alternated—fitting compound for a child of the Sheridan race. At this time she was known to possess a very bright wit indeed, and could be quaintly *méchante* when the occasion called for it. In her early married life, when she was a beautiful young woman, there were some instances of this merry humour circulated, which 'increased the harmless gaiety' of society. One incident found its way into the newspapers, and within the last two years has been several times republished. It would be a pity, therefore, not to record the amusingly original correspondence interchanged between her and Lady Shuckburgh, by which Mr. Disraeli, and everybody else also, was infinitely diverted. It arose out of a simple request to learn the 'character' of a servant.

*The Application.*

'Lady Seymour presents her compliments to Lady Shuckburgh, and would be obliged to her for the character of Mary Stedman. Can she cook plain dishes well? . . . Lady S. would also like to know why she leaves Lady Shuckburgh's service?'

*Lady Shuckburgh, in reply.*

'Lady Shuckburgh presents her compliments to Lady Seymour. Lady Shuckburgh was unacquainted

with the name of the kitchen-maid until mentioned by Lady Seymour, as it is her custom neither to apply for, or give characters to, any of the under-servants, this being always done by the housekeeper, Mrs. Couch—and this was well known to the young woman ; therefore Lady Shuckburgh is surprised at her referring any lady to her for a character. Lady Shuckburgh having a professed cook, as well as a housekeeper, it is not very likely she herself should know anything of the abilities or merits of the under-servants.'

*The Rejoinder.*

'Lady Seymour presents her compliments to Lady Shuckburgh, and begs she will order her house-keeper, Mrs. Pouch, to send the girl's character without delay ; otherwise another young woman will be sought for elsewhere, as Lady Seymour's children cannot remain without their dinners because Lady Shuckburgh, keeping a professed cook and house-keeper, thinks a knowledge of the details of her establishment beneath notice. Lady Seymour under-stood from Stedman that, in addition to her other talents, she was actually capable of dressing food fit for the little Shuckburghs to partake of when hungry.'

To this note was appended 'a pen-and-ink draw-ing by Lady Seymour, depicting the three little Shuckburghs, with large, turnip-looking heads and cauliflower wigs, sitting at table, voraciously scram-

bling for mutton-chops, whilst Mary Stedman looks on with extreme satisfaction.'

*Mrs. Couch intervenes.*

'MADAM,—Lady Shuckburgh has directed me to acquaint you that she declines answering your note, the vulgarity of which is beneath contempt; and although it may be the characteristic of the Sheridans to be vulgar, coarse, and witty, it is not that of a "lady," unless she happens to have been born in a garret and bred in a kitchen. Mary Stedman informs me that your ladyship does not keep either a cook or a housekeeper, and that you only require a girl who can cook a mutton-chop. If so, I apprehend that Mary Stedman or any other scullion will be found fully equal to cook for or manage the establishment of the Queen of Beauty.—I am your ladyship's, etc.

'ELIZABETH COUCH—*not* POUCH.'

All which is almost unique. It is easy to see that the pleasant recklessness of the 'lady of quality' was owing to good spirits, though unbecoming according to strict rule; and the offended lady was not far out in attributing the whole to the unrestrainable temperament of the Sheridans. Even within a short time of her death, specimens of her lively humour and sarcastic observation were repeated.*

* She was in a great West-End Mart, and had asked to see the 'person' who sold her some article the day before. The superintendent brought him with the remark, 'This is the gentleman who

Nearly five-and-twenty years were to pass away; her children had grown up, and she had now become a staid matron. But now, as in her sister's case, heavy domestic trials were awaiting her, to arise from the loss of those she loved. Her second son, Lord Edmund St. Maur, had gone out to India in 1865, and had been destroyed by a tiger when engaged in a hunt, surviving his injuries only a few days. The eldest, Earl St. Maur, was of an adventurous turn, and after witnessing the Mutiny in India, and serving under Garibaldi in Italy, came home much impaired in health. In 1869 he expired rather suddenly, and under very sad circumstances. The loss of this, the eldest son, was even more lamentable, owing to the frantic grief of his mother which led her to assume that he had been wrongly treated by his physician, a man of high reputation. In all the bitterness of this conviction, she was so injudicious as to circulate among her friends a printed statement, and the physician, for the sake of his reputation, was compelled to bring the matter before

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had the pleasure of attending you.' 'No,' said her Grace promptly, 'I think it was that *bald-headed nobleman* yonder.' Another answer was set down to her credit, though I know not on what authority. At a charity bazaar she was persuading the witty and corpulent Lord Alvanley to buy. On his excusing himself by saying that 'he was the prodigal son that had spent his all, and lived riotously,' she said quietly, 'More likely the fatted calf.' This was the point of her jest, though it may not have been exactly the form.

a court of law. Here, calm judicious advice had its effect—the charges were withdrawn : while, on the other side, generous indulgence was shown for the sufferings of a bereaved mother.

There is a tragic intensity of feeling in her remarkable paper, together with a picturesque power of narration and dramatic force which we rarely meet with. Fervent suffering of this kind often finds expression in these forcible forms. Without reviving any of the controversial matter involved in the case, it will be interesting to give some of the striking passages expressive of a mother's despair. This production is entitled, 'True Account and Real Cause of Earl St. Maur's Sudden Death on September 30, at 20, Dover Street, 1869.' She described with painful minuteness his state of health ; he was indeed in a precarious condition, suffering from asthma and convulsions in the chest. On September 29 he had had a violent fit of coughing, 'and went to sleep in a little back parlour, where I had a little iron bedstead put up. Next morning, at about eight, my maid ran into the room—"The Earl is taken ill!" I hurried down the two flights of stairs. "He is down upon the floor!" A clay-cold hand clasps mine. "O mother!" and he became speechless. My maid and I raised him up, sitting against our knees. I sent a pressing urgent message to the doctor, "Earl St. Maur is insensible upon the floor." I remained three quarters of an

hour on my knees, supporting a gasping, apparently dying, man.

'Slowly my son recovered. Before he could speak, he nodded when he was asked if the remedy was doing him good. Power of speech at length returned: he breathed better. Seven hours of daylight saw my son quiet and at ease. After I had taken all possible precautions, if there existed obscure disease I had, at least, done all I could. I should have had all the advantages which money could procure, all the help which science could give. The result was beyond human means, and I would have been resigned; but as it was, in an unfurnished dark room, during the fast-advancing dusk, without the smallest warning or preparation of any sort, obliged to send out every minute to buy every little item at the cost of precious time lost—feathers to probe the cut, allumettes to see if the air passed through the windpipe—tearing up my night-dress for rag, cutting the strings of my petticoat for the surgeons, waiting on them myself because there were no servants, *expired our only son!* No pauper could have died more denuded of chances; no wandering Hagar could have seen her son perish more helplessly, or more alone.'

She describes the closing moments in these piteous terms: 'When, feeling positive all would be soon over, I advanced and said, "All his wishes I know, and would follow out," he opened wide his eyes, turned towards me, and made a great effort to

explain something, gave a great shudder and expired. When dying myself I will rather creep under a hedge, or into the cleft of a rock, like a wounded animal, than be subjected to the humiliating aggravations, stupefied by the swiftness of all these horrors —but I can't forget it or forgive myself. The surgeon turned round and asked, "Were there no relations?" Well he might be astonished that the machine, waiting and serving them as in a dream, was the mother! Never can I forgive myself for my want of presence of mind. I am justly punished by the haunting, ever-present horror of that scene.'

After this heavy loss the world heard little of her, and appeared to have forgotten the former radiant 'Queen of Beauty.' She seems to have lived retired at her country-place, Bulstrode, where she found her life 'so dull,' as one so afflicted would. The old Sheridan quaint humour flashed up now and again. 'She delighted in the smaller tyrannies,' as one who knew her pleasantly describes it, and prescribed to those who accompanied her to feed her pets, the duty of holding shovels of corn. This she turned into a solemnly grotesque office, and when all were laughing would wave her hand tragically, and say to her friends, 'My only amusement!'

'They say her nature changed very much as she got old; but then they were both soured, I think, by the loss of their sons, and she had so much suffering. She bore it very pluckily; but, I suppose,

it did not soften her. She thought she was going to get well the Friday before she died, and when she reached London that evening, having driven up from Bulstrode (and having kept the carriage waiting as usual from ten till two—late to the last), she expressed herself as going to live again at last, having got away from her prison, Bulstrode. But on the Sunday following the 14th she died.' Then all the world with surprise recalled what had been so long forgotten—the jousts at Eglinton, the 'Queen of Beauty,' and Sheridan's granddaughter. Her husband did not long survive her, and died a few months back.

But this does not exhaust the brilliant list. There remains yet another beautiful sister, gay and witty also, but with more sentiment and of a more retiring nature. Her life, too, had not the same cast of adventure, though in one portion it had its romance. This, it will be remembered, was Helen, the beautiful Mrs. Blackwood of the George Street days, and later better known as Lady Dufferin. Born in 1807, she spent her childhood at Hampton Court Palace, where her mother had been given apartments. When she grew up she became, as we have seen, one of the attractions of the family, and shared with her sisters in the complimentary title of 'The Three Graces.' When only eighteen she married Mr. Price Blackwood, who in the year 1839 succeeded to the title of Dufferin, and died in 1841.

She had not the strong literary taste of her sister, Mrs. Norton, but for smaller exertions attained a greater popularity, because extended to all the classes of the community. Both sisters had the rare gift of writing suitable words for music, a matter of difficulty, and requiring the nicest instinct. Many professional poets have failed in such attempts. Mrs. Norton attained popularity for some well-known lyrics—'Love Not,' 'The Dream,' etc.; indeed her 'works,' in this line, fill many volumes. One song by Lady Dufferin may be said to have been sung over the whole English-speaking world. This was the 'Irish Emigrant'—'I'm sitting by the stile, Mary'—which from the pathos, both of words and tune, was acceptable to all. Authors of more pretension may well be inclined to envy this sort of popularity, testified by 'grinding' on organs, 'hummed' by the workman at his labour, or sung to shouts of applause in vast concert-rooms. Almost as popular was another quaintly humorous Irish song, 'Katie's Letter,' beginning:

'Oh, girls dear,
Did ye never hear,
I sent my love a letther,' etc.,

which offered dramatic opportunities of archness and coquettishness to many a fair singer. She herself was in the habit of giving her own songs with much piquancy of effect.

Few indeed, as she grew mature, seemed to

possess so tranquil and amiable a disposition; and those who knew her even slightly were invariably struck by the singular *sweetness* of her manner, tone, and expression. She had the same pleasant gift of irony as her sisters, and her conversation and letters abounded in little airy touches, that exhilarated reader and listener.*

There was a strange similarity as to one incident in the lives of two of the sisters. Mrs. Norton was married for the second time, only a short time before her death, in her drawing-room, to Sir W. Stirling Maxwell. Lord Gifford had conceived a devoted attachment for Lady Dufferin, and when on his death-bed she consented to marry him, gratifying what were almost his last wishes. He lived but two months. This amiable and accomplished lady died in June, 1867.

We now come to another generation of this surprising family, to whom the legacy of genius or talent did not fail to pass. The son of Lady Dufferin

* As in a letter to the writer of these pages on a character in a novel: 'She is singularly fascinating, in spite of some little traits of character which perhaps do not quite command our esteem; but then there are so many persons whom we ought to esteem, and do *not* like, that I think we may allow ourselves this erratic predilection *per compenso*. I still prefer my old friend the barrister, but that may be only the natural effect of my sex's weakness. Tell J. L. that I shall look over any delay in getting a letter from him, so that it be a *fat* one! I mean in *real literary substance*, and not on that horrid cardboard texture of paper which he affects.'

became speedily known as a person of singular grace of manner, with an unfailing tact and capacity for negotiation which was wholly unlike the traditions of the family. Few men of our time can boast so continuously successful a career, each position leading to a fresh advance. He seems, indeed, one of those persons who are indispensable to the State for particular forms of service. He early attracted attention by an account of a yacht voyage to Iceland —'Letters from High Latitudes'—marked by an extraordinary vivacity and picturesque narrative and lively touches of character. But he was soon distinguished in more conspicuous ways by a series of missions to Vienna, Syria, etc. It was found that he possessed much skill in the handling of delicate questions, and he became Ambassador to Russia and to Turkey, in which capacity he was found a *persona grata*, or *gratissima*, to the respective Courts, besides satisfying his own with a full measure of success. Other distinctions were in store for him—the Governorship of Canada; while at the present moment he fills the brilliant post of Viceroy of India. He also has well maintained the literary honours of the family.

It will be recollected that one of Sheridan's sisters was married to a Mr. Knowles, who was connected in some way with Dublin Castle. Their son was the well-known Sheridan Knowles, the dramatist, and author of several successful pieces. This extraordinary

being seemed to unite with much talent all the traditional peculiarities of the 'stage Irishman,' and a great deal of the Sheridan impulsiveness. The late Mr. Planché, who knew him well, having put many of his pieces on the stage, declares with emphasis: 'Of all the eccentric individuals I ever encountered, Sheridan Knowles was, I think, the greatest.' And he adds some curious stories to illustrate his opinion. Knowles once sent his wife, by post, a sum of £200, which never reached its destination. On this he made angry, vehement complaints to the head of the Post Office, the well-known Sir Francis Freeling, bitterly complaining of the treatment he had received, and demanding an apology. Sir Francis wrote him a courteous letter, saying that he had derived 'so much pleasure from Mr. Knowles's works, that he looked upon him as a valued friend, adding that he (Knowles) was perfectly correct in stating that he had posted a letter containing £200, but that, unfortunately, he had omitted not only his signature inside, but *the address outside*, having actually sealed up the notes in an envelope containing only the words, "I send you the money." He concluded by assuring him that long before he would receive his answer the money would be placed in Mrs. Knowles's hands by a special messenger. Knowles wrote back, "My dear sir, you are right, and I was wrong. God bless you! I'll call upon you when I come to town."

'One day, also in the country, he said to Abbot, with whom he had been acting there, "My dear fellow, I'm off to-morrow. Can I take any letters for you?" "You're very kind," answered Abbot; "but where are you going to?" "*I haven't made up my mind*," was the answer.

'An opera was produced at Covent Garden,' goes on Mr. Planché, 'the story of which turned upon the love of a young count for a gipsy girl, whom he subsequently deserts for a lady of rank and fortune; and in the second act there was a fête in the gardens of the château in honour of the bride-elect. Mr. Binge, who played the count, was seated in an arbour near to one of the wings witnessing a ballet. Knowles, who had been in front during the previous part of the opera, came behind the scenes; and, advancing as near as he could to Binge without being in sight of the audience, called to him in a loud whisper, "Binge!" Binge looked over his shoulder. "Well, what is it?" "Tell me. *Do* you marry the poor gipsy after all?" "Yes," answered Binge impatiently, stretching his arm out behind him, and making signs with it for Knowles to keep back. Knowles caught his hand, pressed it fervently, and exclaimed, "*God bless you! You are a good fellow!*" This I saw and heard myself, as I was standing at the wing during the time.'

He was born at Cork, May 12, 1784. When he was only fourteen he produced an opera called

'The Chevalier Grillon;' and coming to London, became acquainted with Lamb, Coleridge, and others of that 'set.' In 1808 he appeared on the stage at Dublin; but one of his most popular dramatic productions, 'Virginius,' was first brought out in 1820, written for his countryman Macready. After a long series of dramatic successes, his mind took another turn, and about the year 1849 he became a religious lecturer, and finally a Baptist minister and controversialist. He died on December 1, 1862.

There was a connection of the family whose name was familiar during the 'Annual' era, and as the authoress of many popular songs and lyrics. This was Miss Louisa Sheridan, who edited the oddly-named 'Comic Offering,' and the 'Diadem.' She eventually married Sir Henry Wyatt, and died about 1841. It is also said that the well-known American, General Sheridan, belonged to the same stock.

There was yet another of the race who in our day achieved a reputation of a special kind, as a writer possessing a singular power of dealing with lurid materials, and infusing romance into elements of horror. In his case, again, we find a new strain introduced into the Sheridan stock—an infusion of foreign blood. This was that clever, interesting man, JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU, who possessed singular versatility of gifts—irony, pathos, sarcasm, and a genial humour—joined to a very

retiring, sensitive disposition, which stood in the way of his reaching to a far higher reputation, and perhaps prevented his reaping the fruits of success. His family was of French origin, coming to Ireland from Caen, driven from France, like so many others, by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

In Dublin, at this moment, there are many of these old Huguenot names—Littons, Le Nauzes, Perrins, Chaigneaus, etc. Joseph Le Fanu, a son of one of these French exiles, was Clerk of the Crown in that city, about the middle of last century, and married, for his second wife, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's sister, Alicia, whose daughter wrote that account of her family to which these volumes have been much indebted. His brother, Captain Henry Le Fanu, of Leamington, married the other sister. The son of Joseph became Dean Le Fanu, whose son was Joseph Sheridan the novelist, born August 28, 1814.

When a mere boy he exhibited a pleasant humour, which often saved him from punishment. Once his father, the Dean of Emly, had occasion to rebuke him for coming down late in the morning. 'I well remember,' says his brother, 'breakfast was nearly over, and Joe had not appeared. My father held his watch in his hand; 'twas nearly ten o'clock. And when Joe at last entered, he said in his severest voice, "I ask you, Joseph—I *ask* you

seriously, is *this* right?" "No, sir; I'm sure it must be fast," was the reply.' More original and quaint was the following, which it is hard to read without a smile. Walking along the road near Dublin, he met an elderly woman unknown to him, but who seemed to recognise him. 'Ah, then, Masther Richard, is that yourself?' 'Myself, of course it's myself,' was the reply. The woman then fell in raptures about the 'ould times' and 'the dear misthress,' with details about the length of time since she had seen them all. Amused at this mistake, he said the family were all well; but why did she not come and see them? Confidentially she replied, 'Shure you know, Masther Richard, since the little business of the spoons—oh, I daren't go near the place.' 'Oh,' said the humourist, 'that's all forgotten long ago! *Do* come up and see them!' 'Ah! d'ye say that, Masther Richard?' 'To be sure! Come to dinner next Sunday with the servants; you'll see how they'll all welcome you!'

There is something comically original in this, especially in the thought of the woman presenting herself to her former friends, and of the reception she was likely to obtain. It is quite in his ancestor's manner. Of such quaint jests he was fond in his maturer age. One of the contributors to his magazine had published a novel, which was very successful, with the result of making the writer highly elated, his bearing, perhaps, reaching to

conceit or patronage. His friend conceived the following wholesome little remedy. He wrote a severe review of it, touching on some weak places, and had it inserted in one of his newspapers, though it was printed only in a single copy. This was cut out, and, as if extracted from the *Times* or *Saturday Review*, was sent to the author with a condoling letter. He suffered only for a few minutes, the hoaxer promptly following to confess the trick.

When a child he had a precocious turn for putting overwise questions, and for making curious answers. We may conceive how astonished and perhaps shocked was the worthy Dean, his father, when the boy one day presented him with a little story, in which was the following description of life given by a father to his son, on setting out in the world: 'A man's life naturally divides itself into three distinct parts—the first, when he is planning and contriving all kinds of villany and rascality. *That is the period of youth and innocence.* In the second, he is found putting in practice all the villany and rascality he has contrived. *That* is the flower of manhood and prime of life. The third and last period is that when he is making his soul and preparing for another world. *That is the period of dotage.*' This was amusing, if startling.

He was ever remarkable, as I have said, for a delightful gift of humorous sarcasm, playful and yet

severe ; and for a singular sweetness of disposition, with an antique simplicity of manner which came of his retired life. He early threw himself into local politics, which had rather a prejudicial effect on his nature, his gloomy imagination giving them larger proportions than they deserved. Some pamphlets, written on questions now forgotten, had extraordinary success from their admirable spirit of *persiflage*. Few men have written more or more diligently. He delighted in composition—was the proprietor of several newspapers, and the once important and popular *Dublin University Magazine*, which first introduced his countryman Lever's novels to the public. Two of his earliest novels attracted attention, 'Torlough O'Brien,' and 'The Cock and Anchor,' the latter written in the style of Ainsworth. But it was not until the publication of a remarkable novel of a weird character—'Uncle Silas'—that his reputation was made. This was followed by a long series of stories in the same vein, which succeeded each other rapidly until his death. Many of these stories still enjoy their old popularity.

His memory is also dear to the reciter whose ambition is to render with due dramatic effect the history of 'Shamus O'Brien,' which is known to the most remote of the Irish-speaking race. This vivid picture of Irish life, contrived with an exquisite art for the purpose of being recited, exhibit-

ing alternate humour and pathos, was written at the request of another gifted member of the family, his brother William. Anyone who has heard this admirable performance—one brother reciting the piece, the other listening with unaffected enjoyment to his own production and its interpretation—can testify to the extraordinary effect it produced. His brother has furnished this interesting account of what suggested the composition of this stirring lyric:

'During his college career he began that series of stories, some pathetic, some replete with wit and humour, all highly illustrative of the habits and feelings of the Irish peasantry, which afterwards appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* under the title of "Extracts from the MS. Papers of the late Rev. Francis Purcell, of Drumcoolagh," and which have been recently published as the "Purcell Papers" under the editorship of his valued friend, Alfred Percival Graves. Some of these stories I used to tell for the amusement of young friends, and I begged my brother to write for me an Irish ballad for recitation; he wished me to choose the subject, so I asked him to let me have an Irish "young Lochinvar." In a few days he gave me "Phaudhrig Croohore" (Anglicè, Patrick Connor), and very soon afterwards sent me—I was then in the north of Ireland—"Shamus O'Brien," from day to day as he wrote it. He kept no copy, and years after, when

he wished to publish it in the *Dublin University Magazine*, I had to write it out from memory for him. The authorship of the ballad, especially in America, where it is well known and very popular, has been sometimes attributed to Lover, probably owing to his having been the first to recite it there in his entertainments, which chiefly consisted of songs and recitations of his own composition. Shortly before he started on his American tour he heard me recite "Shamus O'Brien," and was so much struck with it that he begged me to write it out for him. Some time afterwards I received the following letter from him:

'"Astor House, New York, U. S. America,
September 30th, 1846.

'"My dear Le Fanu,—In reading over your brother's poem, while I crossed the Atlantic, I became more and more impressed with its great beauty and dramatic effect; so much so that I determined to test its effect in public, and have done so here, on my first appearance, with the greatest success. Now I have no doubt there will be great praises of the poem, and people will suppose most likely that the composition is mine; and, as you know (I take it for granted) that I would not wish to wear a borrowed feather, I should be glad to give your brother's name as the author, should he not object to have it known; but as his writings are

often of so different a tone, I would not speak without permission to do so. It is true that in my programme my name is attached to other pieces, and no name appended to the recitation; so far, you will see, I have done all I could to avoid 'appropriating' the spirit, at which I might have caught here with Irish aptitude; but I would like to have the means of telling all whom it may concern, the name of the author to whose head and heart it does so much honour. Pray, my dear Le Fanu, inquire and answer me here by next packet, or as soon as convenient. My success here has been quite triumphant.

'"Yours very truly,

'"SAMUEL LOVER."

'Lover did, however, add a few lines of his own, which have appeared in some published versions of the poem, in which he makes Shamus emigrate to America, and set up a public-house (!); but they are poor in verse, and injure the dramatic effect of the ballad.

'In 1858 an overwhelming blow, from which he never recovered, fell upon him in the sudden death of his beloved wife. From that time he led a secluded life, mixing little in society; and in the latter years of his life was seldom seen, except by his own immediate family and a few intimate friends. To the public he was scarcely known,

apart from his works. To those who knew him he was very dear.

'In 1863 "The House by the Churchyard" was published, which was soon followed by "Uncle Silas" and other novels of which it is unnecessary to speak. "Uncle Silas" was perhaps the best of his works, the plot most skilfully contrived, the interest the most absorbing.

'On the 7th of February, 1873, just after he had completed his last work, "Willing to Die," he breathed his last in his house in Merrion Square, deeply mourned by his children, and by the few who knew him well, who admired him for his learning, his sparkling wit and delightful conversation, and loved him for his noble and generous qualities. He was a man who thought very deeply on religious subjects.'

There was something fascinating in this remarkable man, whose highest gifts, as we have seen, were literally unknown to the public—his delicate humour, cordial nature, generosity, true kindness and charity, and hearty sympathy with those below him in station. His warmth of friendship was remarkable; and if there was a defect in his nature, it was that weakness of over-delicate and sensitive minds, in imagining that others were hostile to him, or that their hostility amounted to animosity. But few could have known him better than the present writer, who, living close by him, often remained until the small hours of the

morning listening to his quaint humour, and his curious alternations from gay to grave, his strange conceits and odd ghostly stories of an unusual pattern. There was much of the Sheridan temperament in his nature, even to a tranquil indifference to the regulation of money affairs. Round us in that room hung the portraits of all the members of the family—of old Thomas, the actor, in his skull-cap; Mrs. Sheridan, his wife; with various others of the race, nearly a dozen in number. These had all come to him by inheritance. His talent has descended to one of his daughters, who has written some clever novels.

Surely it must be admitted that this is indeed a brilliant record for a single family to show, of the brightest talents and abilities exhibited in every line. Even the more obscure members seem to have caught sparks of the traditional fire. Common to all seems to have been that love of adventure which supplied spirit, and perhaps success; for the more sober pause to calculate the risk, and thus may lose the favourable chance. The centre of all, however, is the brilliant and versatile RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, whose troubled course we have followed all through its most exciting and disastrous turns.

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At the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden,

This preſent TUESDAY, November 21, 1775,

Will be preſented a New COMIC OPERA, call'd

# The DUENNA:

OR THE

# DOUBLE ELOPEMENT.

The PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS by

Mr. MATTOCKS,

Mr. QUICK,

Mr. WILSON,

Mr. DU BELLAMY,

Mr. MAHON,

Mr. WEWITZER, Mr. FOX, Mr. BAKER,

AND

Mr. LEONI.

Miss BROWN,

Mrs. GREEN,

Mrs. MATTOCKS,

The MUSIC partly NEW and partly selected from the most EMINENT COMPOSERS.
With a NEW OVERTURE, SCENES, DRESSES, and other DECORATIONS.

End of Act II. a new SPANISH DANCE

By Signor & Signora ZUCHELLI, & Mr. DAGUVILLE,

Signora VIDINI, &c.

To which will be added (not acted here these Ten Years)

# The LYING VALET.

Sharp (First Time) by Mr. LEE LEWES,

Gayless by Mr. DAVIS,

Justice Guttle by Mr. BOOTH, Dick by Mr. JONES,

Beau Trippet by Mr. WEWITZER,

Meliſſa by Miss AMBROSE.

Mrs. Gadabout, Mrs. POUSSIN, Trippet, Mrs. MASTERS,

Kitty Pry by Mrs. PITT.

BOOKS of the SONGS in the OPERA to be had at the Theatre.

The Doors to be open at Five o'clock, to begin exactly at Six.

[*Vivant Rex et Regina.*

NEVER PERFORMED.

# At the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane,

This preſent THURSDAY, the 8th of May, 1777,

Will be preſented a NEW COMEDY call'd THE

# School for Scandal.

The PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS by

Mr. KING,

Mr. YATES,

Mr. DODD,

Mr. PALMER,

Mr. PARSONS,

Mr. BADDELEY, Mr. AICKIN,

Mr. PACKER, Mr. FARREN,

Mr. LAMASH, Mr. GAUDRY,

Mr. R. PALMER, Mr. NORRIS, Mr. CHAPLIN,

And Mr. SMITH.

Miſs POPE,

Miſs P. HOPKINS,

Miſs SHERRY,

And Mrs. ABINGTON.

The Prologue to be ſpoken by Mr. KING,

And the Epilogue by Mrs. ABINGTON.

With NEW SCENES and DRESSES.

To which will be added

# The MAYOR of GARRATT.

Major Sturgeon by Mr. BANNISTER,

Sir Jacob Jollup by Mr. WALDRON,

Mr. Bruin by Mr. WRIGHT,

Lint by Mr. WRIGHTEN. Heeltap by Mr. BRANSBY,

Jerry Sneak by Mr. BAKER,

Mrs. Bruin by Miſs PLATT,

Mrs. Sneak (firſt time) by Mrs. DAVIES,

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The Doors will be opened at Half after Five, to begin exactly at Half after [Six o'clock.

THE EIGHTH TIME THIS SEASON.

By his MAJESTY's COMPANY,

# At the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane.

This present Tuesday, November 24, 1778,

# THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.

Sir Peter Teazle by Mr. KING,
Sir Oliver Surface by Mr. YATES,
Joseph Surface by Mr. PALMER,
Sir Benjamin Backbite by Mr. DODD.
Crabtree by Mr. PARSONS,
Rowley by Mr. AICKIN,
Moses by Mr. BADDELEY,
Snake by Mr. PACKER,
Careless by Mr. FARREN, Trip by Mr. LAMASH,
And Charles by Mr. SMITH.
Mrs. Candour by Miss POPE,
Maria by Mrs. BRERETON,
Lady Sneerwell by Miss SHERRY,
And Lady Teazle by Mrs. ABINGTON.
In Act III. A Song by Mr. GAUDRY.

To which will be added a Musical Entertainment, called

# The WATERMAN.

Tugg by Mr. BANNISTER,
Bundle by Mr. DAVIES,
Robin by Mr. LAMASH,
Wilhelmina by Miss SIMSON,
Mrs. Bundle by Mrs. WRIGHTEN.

To conclude with a Grand Representation of

A REGATTA.

To-morrow, the comic Opera of The SCHOOL for FATHERS.
With (the 33rd Time) the New Entertainment of The CAMP.

The laſt time of performing till the Holidays.

# Theatre Royal, Drury-Lane,

This preſent SATURDAY, APRIL 5th. 1800,

Their Majeſties Servants will perform a Tragedy in Five Acts called

# PIZARRO.

The SCENERY, DRESSES, and DECORATIONS, entirely New.
The Muſick, Airs, Choruſſes, and Marches, incidental to the Piece,
Compoſed by Mr. KELLY.
The Symphony preceding the Play, and thoſe between the Acts,
Compoſed for the occaſion, by Mr. DUSSECK.

Ataliba, Mr. POWELL,
Rolla, Mr. KEMBLE,
Alonzo, Mr. C. KEMBLE,
Pizarro, Mr. BARRYMORE,
Almagro, Mr. CAULFIELD, Gonzalo, Mr. WENTWORTH,
Davilla, Mr. SURMONT, Gomez, Mr. TRUEMAN,
Valverde, Mr. PALMER, Las-Caſas, Mr. PACKER,
Orozembo, Mr. DOWTON, Blind Man, Mr. CORY,
Centinel, Mr. HOLLAND, Orano, Mr. ARCHER,
Attendant, Mr. MADDOCKS, Boy, Maſter CHATTERLEY,
Cora, Miſs BIGGS,
Elvira, Mrs. SIDDONS.

The Vocal Parts by

Mr. SEDGWICK,
Mr. DIGNUM, Mr. DANBY,
Mrs. CROUCH,
Miſs DE CAMP, Miſs STEPHENS,
Miſs LEAK, Miſs MENAGE.

Meſſrs. Cooke, Tett, Caulfield, Jun. Sawyer, Danby, Jun. Aylmer.
Meſds. Arne, Menage, Roffey, Menage, Jun. Wentworth, Chippendale,

The SCENERY Deſigned And executed by
Meſſrs. MARINARI, GREENWOOD,
DEMARIA, BANKS, BLACKMORE, &c.
The MACHINERY, DECORATIONS, and DRESSES under the
Direction of Mr. JOHNSTON,
And executed by him, Mr. UNDERWOOD and Mr. GAY.
The Female Dreſſes Designed and executed by Miſs REIN.

To which will be added a Farce called

# The LIAR.

On Eaſter Monday, and Tueſday, will be performed The Revived Romance of LODOISKA, being the laſt nights it can be repreſented this Seaſon.

†‡† A new Tragedy which has been ſome time in preparation, and is now in Rehearſal, will be ſpeedily produced, with entirely New Scenery, Dreſſes and Decorations.

A New Farce called the INDIAN is in Rehearſal and will be produced immediately after the holidays.

BSB Bayerische StaatsBibliothek
MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

Fitzgerald, Percy

The lives of Sheridans In two volumes. With Engravings on Steel by Stodart and Every

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